

# **“From Sod House to Lefse House”**

*Immigration, Ethnicity, and the Formation and Reformulation of the Norwegian-Canadian Identity in Western Canada.*

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## **Abstract**

This thesis investigates the formation and reformulation of a distinct Norwegian-Canadian identity in western Canada. It argues that Norwegian immigrants to Canada in the beginning of the twentieth century adapted to Canadian society through their Norwegian lenses and worldview, and created a distinct Norwegian-Canadian western identity through the establishment of various organizations. During the late 1930s and 1940s, mainly as a result of the Great Depression and World War II, Norwegian Canadians seem to have become more assimilated, but there were still some who worked to revive interest in the Norwegian culture. With the movement towards official Multiculturalism in Canada and the initiation of the Multiculturalism policy in 1971, Norwegian Canadians experienced an ethnic revival. The Norwegian-Canadian identity had been reformulated and was now largely expressed through symbols. Still, their Norwegian heritage held great importance, and Norwegian Canadians again celebrated their heritage both privately and publicly.

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Despite useful contributions, final responsibility for any potential errors in this work naturally rests with me.

Kristin Borgenheim,  
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## Chapter One: Introduction

This study is concerned with Canadians of Norwegian descent and the formation and reformulation of their ethnic identity. This introductory chapter will begin by outlining the purpose and delimitation of the study. Then, it will give a brief history of Norwegian immigration to Canada to provide a useful backdrop to the topic of study, as well as discuss historiography pertinent to the thesis. The changing conceptions of ethnic history writing in Canada are particularly important, and the thesis will be positioned according to the differing views. A wide range of materials have been used in this study, including interviews and a close reading of primary and secondary sources, and the methods and sources applied will also be discussed in this chapter. Towards the end of the introduction, relevant terminology is explained, and the structure of the thesis is briefly outlined.

### ***Purpose and Delimitation***

This thesis deals with how the Norwegian immigrants fared when they came to Canada, how they created a distinct Norwegian-Canadian identity in the prairie west, and how Norwegian Canadians have reformulated their identity since the 1960s and 1970s as a result of the Multiculturalism Policy. Most of the Norwegian immigrants to Canada settled in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, known as the three prairie provinces, as well as in British Columbia, but the largest centre of Norwegian immigration on the Canadian prairies was the province of Alberta. Thus, the main focus of this thesis is on the Norwegian immigrants in this province, although other provinces are briefly touched upon as well. In 1971, Canada formally acknowledged its diverse population and nature through the Multiculturalism Policy, however, multiculturalism is nothing new to Canada. Immigrants started arriving to western Canada in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and they came from a great number of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. A majority of these immigrants settled in the prairie west, and they created a unique atmosphere in this part of the country. Different cultures lived side by side, and there was a need to adapt to the new home country in addition to retaining one's own traditions within a multifaceted society. Due to this mass immigration, the prairies went from being a primarily English or French-speaking region in 1885 to a polyglot society in 1891.<sup>1</sup> The result was in many cases a unique prairie identity. With the Multiculturalism Policy, ethnic awareness experienced a revival, partly due to increased government financing of, for example, ethnic groups and festivals, and partly due to

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<sup>1</sup> Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 223.

a larger public dialogue about ethnicity and pride in one's heritage. When discussing the introduction and effects of this policy, the focus will mainly be on Norwegian and Scandinavian Canadians in Edmonton, Alberta. The reason for this is that they seem to have been especially active in the move to official multiculturalism, compared to Canadians of Scandinavian descent elsewhere. In addition, the effects of the policy were great for this group, and the increased activity that started taking place in Edmonton affected Norwegian Canadians in other parts of Alberta; for instance, the creation and planning of a Norwegian language and culture camp with time became a joint venture.

The reasons for analyzing Norwegian-Canadian identity formation and reformulation in regards to the Canadian cultural policy changes are varied. Firstly, the writer holds a great interest in Canada, spurred by the tendency in Norway to focus mainly on the United States when discussing North America. A university exchange to Edmonton and several visits in the years thereafter resulted in an even greater interest. Secondly, Canada has an official Multiculturalism Policy and a different approach to addressing ethnic diversity, as well as a different immigrant makeup and history from Norway. This made the writer curious about the topic of Canadian identity. With such a diverse population and an official Multiculturalism Policy, what constitutes a Canadian? With debates raging in Norway over immigrants' lack of cultural adaptation, it was, as a Norwegian, perceived as particularly intriguing to analyze the ways in which Norwegian immigrants both adapted to Canada as well as maintained Norwegian cultural traits. From studying this, greater understanding of Norway's increasingly multicultural makeup and the specific challenges immigrants are faced with can ensue.

Thirdly, the topic of Norwegians in the Canadian prairie west is quite understudied. In fact, the only comprehensive study that is written about Norwegians in Canada is Gulbrand Loken's *From Fjord to Frontier: A History of the Norwegians in Canada*. Although, he portrays the Norwegians as resourceful founders of churches, schools, lodges and other important institutions, Loken paints a grim picture of the Norwegians in Canada, mainly because they did not maintain their native language. In his opinion, Norwegians were forced to assimilate by English-speaking Canadians. He seems to believe that since the Norwegian settlers did not recreate a "new Norway" in Canada, they lost touch with their roots to a great extent. In addition to Loken's book, there is a preliminary study conducted by Jan Harold Brunvand about Norwegian ethno-cultural traditions in Alberta, focusing mainly on the Camrose area. Brunvand's synthesis is rather short and superficial, and is more like a report on his findings when he travelled around in Alberta than a study of a distinct Norwegian-



Canadian identity.<sup>2</sup> In addition to the abovementioned studies, Kenneth Neil Macartney has studied Scandinavians in Western Canada from 1900-1919, but his study mainly focuses on Swedish immigrants.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the topic of Norwegian Canadians in the prairie west is not only understudied, but also quite poorly understood.

No studies have been instigated to see how Norwegians have adapted to Canadian society and formed and reformulated a new identity, which is what this thesis deals with. Norwegians did not simply transfer their Norwegian traditions and customs to Canada, but that does not mean that they assimilated completely to a new and foreign culture either. Instead, they adapted and formulated a new distinctly Norwegian-Canadian western identity. Royden Loewen and Gerald Friesen argue that immigrants in prairie cities neither completely assimilated nor fully persisted in their old ways, although it could appear like this to outsiders. Instead they “used localized, reinvented ethnic cultures as well as inherited social relations to guide their travels through the labyrinth of the prairie city.”<sup>4</sup> Although Loewen and Friesen focus on prairie cities in particular, their description of immigrant communities fit well with Norwegian Canadians throughout the prairies, not just in the main cities. ***This thesis argues that the Norwegian immigrants adapted to Canadian society through their Norwegian lenses and worldview, and thus created a distinct Norwegian-Canadian western identity. Furthermore, as a result of the discussions leading up to and the implementation of the Multiculturalism Policy, Norwegian Canadians reformulated their ethnic identity and experienced a revival.***

## ***A Brief History of Norwegian Immigration to Canada***

In the mid-nineteenth century, the government of Canada became more interested in opening up the West in order to utilize the resources of that vast area of mainly uncultivated land. This was, among other things, manifested by the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) in 1885, which made the West more accessible and created jobs.<sup>5</sup> The idea of *progress* was introduced in Canada by English settlers in the 1850s, but gained momentum in

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<sup>2</sup> Gulbrand Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier: A History of the Norwegians in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd. in association with the Multiculturalism Directorate, Department of the Secretary of State and the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, 1980) and Jan Harold Brunvand, *Norwegian Settlers in Alberta*, Mercury Series, paper No. 8 (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies, 1974).

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Neil Macartney, “The Scandinavians in Western Canada 1900-1919: Self-Perception and the Great War” (BA Thesis, University of Victoria, 1982).

<sup>4</sup> Royden Loewen and Gerald Friesen, *Immigrants in Prairie Cities: Ethnic Diversity in Twentieth-Century Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 14.

<sup>5</sup> Howard and Tamara Palmer, *Alberta: A New History* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1990), 58-64.

the 1860s and 1870s. This idea was mirrored in the country's immigration policies.<sup>6</sup> Progress, in the eyes of Canadian intellectuals, meant people who were of Anglo-Saxon origin or groups who closely resembled their characteristics. Thus, the most wanted immigrants were Anglo-Saxons from Great Britain and America.<sup>7</sup> In addition, another prevalent thought at the time was the so-called "northern myth," which said that people of northern countries, such as Canada and countries in Northern Europe, were of higher moral standing, health, self-reliance and other admirable characteristics than people from southern countries. The idea was that these northern peoples had learned to live with the harsh and often cold northern climate, and as a result worked harder and were well suited to adapt to the environment in order to survive.<sup>8</sup>

It is within this picture that we find the beginnings of Norwegian immigration to Canada. Still, Canada's southern neighbour received most of the Norwegian immigrants, and we cannot talk about large-scale Norwegian immigration to Canada in the late 1800s. The Canadian government recognized that Norwegians usually landed in Canada, but chose to travel through the country and settle in the United States, mainly in areas where friends and relatives had settled previously. This mass exodus of Norwegians concerned the government of Canada, because they lost these much wanted immigrants to the United States. In fact, a committee of eleven men was established in order to discover how many potential Norwegian immigrants they lost to the United States, as well as to establish the causes behind the Norwegian departure. In addition, they were supposed to come up with solutions on how to persuade the preferred immigrants to stay in Canada.<sup>9</sup> Considering that the mass immigration from Norway was the second largest exodus per capita in Europe at the time, it is no wonder that the government of Canada tried to find out why so few chose to remain within their borders.<sup>10</sup>

The first attempt of a Norwegian settlement in Canada was made in 1854 in the province of Quebec, in the Sherbrooke area, when sixteen Norwegians chose to settle there. This gave the Canadian government an impetus to set aside more crown land for Norwegians, and the general immigrant agent for Canada, A. C. Buchanan, was strongly in favour of this. The new Norwegian colony would be located in the Gaspé area. However, this attempt failed miserably. The conditions for farming were poor in the heavily wooded area, and this

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<sup>6</sup> Wendy Lee Karhoffer, "Visions of a New Land: Government Recruitment of Norwegian Immigrants to Alberta 1870-1930" (MA thesis, University of Calgary, 1991), 22.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-24.

<sup>9</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 17.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

combined with long and hard winters made the location unsuitable. In addition, prices were high, and the immigrant agent who wooed the Norwegians into coming, Closter, evidently managed to deceive them and run away with their money. The result was that the Norwegians migrated to the United States, and their plans for the Norwegian settlement in Canada were abandoned.<sup>11</sup> Instead, Canada's reputation was tarnished, and Norwegians were advised to settle elsewhere.<sup>12</sup>

The main solution to attract Norwegian immigrants became to focus on strategic advertising, by publishing pamphlets written in the Norwegian language and by hiring Norwegian immigration agents who could persuade the immigrants to stay. A pamphlet had been published as early as in 1856, and it was written in English, French, German and Norwegian. Although most of the pamphlets were printed in English and distributed in Britain, 5000 pamphlets were in fact printed in Norwegian and sent to Norway.<sup>13</sup> In 1873, the government of Canada advertised in Norwegian newspapers, and Will MacDougall was sent as an immigration agent to the Scandinavian countries. However, this did not receive positive attention in Norway, especially due to the failed Norwegian settlement at Gaspé, and did therefore not yield any great results.<sup>14</sup> Yet, the first successful Norwegian settlement was established in the Calgary area in 1886, when a few Norwegians came to Calgary to work for the Eau Claire Lumber Company. In addition, some Norwegian farming communities were established in the Bardo area under the leadership of the Lutheran pastor P. B. Anderson in 1893.<sup>15</sup> Still, the examples of Norwegians who chose to stay in Canada were few and far between.

Things started to change in the beginning of the twentieth century when the attractions of the American frontier began to cede, due to bad conditions and poor harvests. The situation for many families grimly reminded them of the situation that had triggered their emigration from Norway, and they contemplated moving yet again to secure a future for their children.<sup>16</sup> The Canadian government tried to take advantage of this and hired special immigration

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<sup>11</sup> Theodore Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America: The American Transition* (New York: Haskell House Publishers Ltd., 1969), 357-382.

<sup>12</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 37.

<sup>13</sup> Johan Schrøder, *Johan Schrøder's Travels in Canada: 1863*, ed. Orm Øverland (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1989), 5. For an example of an immigration pamphlet see "Manitoba og Nordvest-Territoriet (Nord-Amerika): En Skildring af klima, jordbund, høstresultater og erhvervskilder for Kapitalister, Jordbrugere, Haandværkere, Almindelige Arbeidere, Tjenestetyende [sic.], o.s.v., med specielt hensyn til skandinaviske kolonister" (Liverpool: Turner og Dunnett, 1891), accessed October 10, 2010, <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/1596.html>

<sup>14</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 37.

<sup>15</sup> Palmer, *Alberta: A New History*, 71.

<sup>16</sup> Karhoffer, "Visions of New Land," 72.

officers in the United States to encourage Norwegians, among other groups, to leave the United States to take up homesteads in Canada.<sup>17</sup> Canada would become the land of second chances, and so it did for many Norwegians. Yet, although Canada now had become distinguished as a possible destination for Norwegian immigrants, they did not receive more than 10 per cent of those leaving Norway between 1910 and 1914.<sup>18</sup> This illustrates that most of the Norwegian immigrants to Canada in this period migrated from the United States. It is difficult to estimate the exact number of Norwegians coming in from America because Canada did not single Norwegians out as a distinct group in their early censuses. Instead, they were labelled "Scandinavians."<sup>19</sup> It is clear, however, that Canada's campaign in the United States yielded greater results than the campaigns in Norway. In the first six months of 1900, the Norwegian immigration from the United States was more than double that of the immigration coming directly from Norway. 135 Norwegians left America for Canada, whereas only 55 left Norway in the same period.<sup>20</sup>

During the 1900s, a great number of Norwegians left Minnesota and the Dakotas to settle in the three Prairie Provinces. According to the 1901 Census there were 17,316 Scandinavians on the Prairies. This number had increased to 129,760 in 1921.<sup>21</sup> The area that became the most popular with Norwegian settlers was central Alberta, mainly because of the easy access to water, hay and wood, and Camrose quickly became a large Norwegian town surrounded by Norwegian settlements.<sup>22</sup> In fact, the name of Camrose was originally Oslo, named after the capital of Norway.<sup>23</sup> The Wetaskiwin area was another important region, in which Norwegian immigrants from the Dakotas and Minnesota often chose to start their new lives. As a result of this, we find several towns in central Alberta with names inspired by Norwegian immigrants, such as New Norway and Bardo.<sup>24</sup> Although World War I made it difficult for Norwegians in Europe to leave, Norwegians kept coming in from the United States quite unchecked. This was partly due to hostility in states such as Minnesota and

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<sup>17</sup> Howard and Tamara Palmer, *Peoples of Alberta: Portraits of Cultural Diversity* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1987), 12.

<sup>18</sup> Ellenor Ranghild Merriken, *Looking for Country: A Norwegian Immigrant's Alberta Memoir*, ed. Janice Dickin (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1999), 8.

<sup>19</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 24.

<sup>20</sup> Karhoffer, "Visions of New Land," 75.

<sup>21</sup> Jean R. Burnet and Howard Palmer, *"Coming Canadians": An Introduction to a History of Canada's Peoples* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Inc. in association with the Multiculturalism Program, Department of the Secretary of State and the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services, Canada, 1989), 28.

<sup>22</sup> Palmer, *Alberta: A New History*, 87.

<sup>23</sup> Merriken, *Looking for Country*, 8.

<sup>24</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 64-66.

Wisconsin, where non-English-speaking immigrants were mistrusted.<sup>25</sup> In the Interwar Period, the Norwegian immigration kept increasing, but in contrast to the earlier period, the majority of the immigrants now came directly from Europe, not from the United States. Between 1923 and 1930, 19,500 Norwegians entered Canada from Norway directly.<sup>26</sup> In 1927, 5102 Norwegians came to Canada, and this is considered the peak year of Norwegian immigration from Europe to Canada.<sup>27</sup>

By 1929, most of the Norwegian immigration to western Canada was completed. Those who had come in order to make themselves a new home on the prairies had now done so. The reason for this was mainly the Great Depression, marked by the financial crisis that struck the world, followed by severe drought during the Dust Bowl on the Canadian prairies in the 1930s. This combination seriously slowed down, and in many respects hampered, Norwegian immigration to Canada. Also, the severe conditions on the prairies during the 1930s resulted in many Norwegians leaving their homesteads.<sup>28</sup> After the 1930s, Norwegian immigration to Canada was small and sporadic. During World War II a Norwegian Air Force Base was established in Toronto, which again triggered Norwegian immigration.<sup>29</sup> Yet, this small influx did not lead to greater Norwegian immigration to Canada. Norwegians who chose to move to Canada after World War II, and up until today, were mainly well-educated, between the ages of 24 to 30, fluent in English at the point of arrival, and did not settle in farming communities on the prairies. Instead, Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia landed the majority of them. In addition, with good economy and a high standard of living, hardly any Norwegians needed to emigrate to secure their children's future.

On the basis of this, it seems safe to say that it is likely that the days of mass influxes of Norwegian immigrants to Canada are over.<sup>30</sup> In the 2006 Census, 432,515 Canadians stated Norwegian as their ethnic origin. 44,790 of them said Norwegian was their only ethnic origin, whereas 387,725 stated Norwegian in combination with other ethnic backgrounds. This makes Norwegians the largest Scandinavian group in Canada and the seventeenth largest ethnic group in total.<sup>31</sup> 144,585 of the Canadians of Norwegian descent lived in Alberta, which

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<sup>25</sup> Burnet and Palmer, "*Coming Canadians*," 33.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>27</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 96-97.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-46 and 104-105.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 121-123.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 225-227.

<sup>31</sup> Statistics Canada, "Ethnocultural Portrait of Canada", accessed November 29, 2010,

[http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/hlt/97-](http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/hlt/97-562/pages/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&Code=01&Data=Count&Table=2&StartRec=1&Sort=3&Display=All&CSDFilter=5000)

[562/pages/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&Code=01&Data=Count&Table=2&StartRec=1&Sort=3&Display=All&CSDFilter=5000](http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/hlt/97-562/pages/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&Code=01&Data=Count&Table=2&StartRec=1&Sort=3&Display=All&CSDFilter=5000).

makes them the eleventh largest ethnic group in the province, and over 1.5 times bigger than the second largest Scandinavian group; the Swedish.<sup>32</sup>

## ***Historiography***

Immigration to the Canadian west and its implications for the country and the different ethnic groups, especially in regards to the emergence of multiculturalism, is a widely studied field in Canada. Rural ethnographical historiography started with the Anglo-Canadian historians who were firm believers in the Anglo-conformity model of immigration. This model was common in a number of British colonies, where the idea was that British, and in particular English, customs and behaviours were superior. This idea was based on both religious and sociological beliefs. An ethnic countryside could only survive if the immigrants conformed to these superior values and attitudes. Thus, the Anglo-Canadian historians believed that an ethnic prairie was not just unattainable, but it should not be strived for.<sup>33</sup> The histories that were written were chiefly concerned with the level of assimilation that had taken place, and those immigrant groups which, for example, mastered English would be portrayed in a positive light. Royden Loewen calls this era the “Bright Lights” period, in which writers such as J. S. Woodsworth proclaimed that he did not want the immigrants’ foreign ways and civilization “transplanted to ... our virgin soil.”<sup>34</sup> It was acknowledged that Canada needed immigrants, but signs of assimilation were recorded favourably. The result was that the history books portrayed how the immigrants were changed by, not how they contributed to, their surroundings. These historians corresponded well to the general view on immigration in Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Immigrants of British stock were favoured, followed by people who were believed to be easily assimilated.

The school that came after the Anglo-Canadian historians in the late 1930s was the ethnic group historians. This portrayal shifted the focus more from the immigrants as potential Canadians to them as members of distinct ethnic groups. Although not antithetical to the Anglo-Canadians, these historians focused on immigrant achievement instead of level of assimilability.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the works would now praise the immigrants’ contributions to Canadian society, instead of their ability to fit into the already established norms. This view is also known as filiopietistic, and Gulbrand Loken’s history of Norwegians to Canada falls within

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<sup>32</sup> Statistics Canada, “Ethnic origins, 2006 counts, for Canada, provinces and territories – 20 % sample data”, accessed November 29, 2010, <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/hlt/97-562/pages/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&Code=48&Table=2&Data=Count&StartRec=1&Sort=3&Display=All>.

<sup>33</sup> Royden Loewen, “Bright Lights, Hard Truths, Soft Facts: The Evolving Literature of Ethnic Farm Life in Prairie Canada,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 28, Issue 2 (1996): 26.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*: 26.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*: 27.

this school of thought. For instance, he notes that medical insurance schemes, credit unions and wheat pools became solutions for people during the Depression years, and “Norwegians were often leaders and generally active members in these battles.” Also, during the war the Norwegians “gave freely of [their] sons and daughters to defend freedom.”<sup>36</sup> Perhaps even more important were the Norwegians’ morale and work ethic: “The positive attitude towards work, deeply engrained in Norwegians, was transplanted intact to the environment in Canada.”<sup>37</sup> The ethnic writers in the 1950s continued to praise immigrant achievement, albeit they seemed more sophisticated since they added sociological and social historical views to their syntheses. It was important for these historians to establish the notion that the immigrants were contributing and rightful Canadians, and a number of these historians were themselves members of the groups under study.<sup>38</sup>

After World War II, social scientists started questioning the idea of assimilation. Throughout North America, it was noticed that different ethnic groups had distinct identities and one talked about a “melting pot that did not happen.”<sup>39</sup> Assimilation was no longer linked to a complete shedding of one’s culture, but it could take different shapes and form for every immigrant. For instance, it was noticed that cultural assimilation did not have to happen as a result of structural assimilation. In combination with these observations, Canadian historians such as Ramsay Cook, J. M. S. Careless and Howard Palmer, started perceiving the country as multicultural. Canada was a country of what Careless termed “limited identities,” and these historians wanted to write the history of other ethnic groups as well, such as Norwegians. They believed that all ethnic groups had contributed to Canada’s multicultural nature, and wanted to include groups that traditionally were rural immigrants. This coincided with the new Canadian social history that wanted to write history from the “bottom up,” and the result was a great increase in ethnic histories. However, once these ethnic histories became grassroots histories, they tended to display all sides of the immigrants’ experiences, including the negative ones. The idea was to portray the nature of immigrant communities, and all sides of their nature had to be examined. As a result of this, Loewen calls this period the “Hard Truths.”<sup>40</sup>

In more recent years, scholars have focused on the cultures of the different immigrant groups. High culture such as poetry, singing, or dancing, is not what is meant by culture, “but

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<sup>36</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 124.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>38</sup> Loewen, “Bright Lights, Hard Truths, Soft Facts:” 27.

<sup>39</sup> As quoted in Loewen, “Bright Lights, Hard Truths, Soft Facts:” 28.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*: 28-29.

the symbols and systems of meaning constructed by ordinary people in the everyday to make sense of life, and particularly to make sense of changes and incongruencies [sic.] in life.”<sup>41</sup> The essence is to understand how the immigrants create meaning for themselves and how they interact with the new environment. The idea is that they use traits from their culture in order to do so. In prairie Canada it has been noticed that the different ethnicities have affected the environment, and Loewen says that this is more common than to examine how the environment has affected their ethnicity. He terms this scholarly tradition the “Soft Facts” period.<sup>42</sup> There are, however, examples of historians who write about the connection between rurality and ethnicity. One recent example is Frances Swyripa’s *Storied Landscapes: Ethno-Religious Identity and the Canadian Prairies*. She explains that “the region’s ethno-religious distinctiveness emerged from and described the rural West” which “ensured that the rural West retained an inflated importance in the collective imagination well after large-scale urbanization reduced its impact in everyday life.”<sup>43</sup> This thesis is influenced by the “Soft Facts” way of thinking, in that it argues that Norwegian-Canadian westerners both shaped and were shaped by the region in which they settled. There are obvious examples of Norwegian contributions to Canada, such as the Camrose Lutheran College, but these contributions are not praised in a filiopietistic way. Instead the aim is to shed light on how the Norwegians who came in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries sought after and established traditional Norwegian institutions to interact with their new surroundings. This view is also important when examining how Norwegian Canadians have reformulated their identity after the enactment of the Multiculturalism Policy. The establishment of new organizations in the wake of this policy, such as the Canadian Birkebeiner in 1985, can for instance be seen as modern examples of how Norwegian traditions are being adapted to the Canadian environment and used as cultural markers, as well as contributions to Canada at large. The Multiculturalism Policy in itself, however, resembles the filiopietistic view in that the government wants to “recognize the existence of communities whose members share a common origin in their historic contribution to Canadian society, and enhance their development.”<sup>44</sup>

In addition to the a variety of historical materials that shed light on trends within ethnic groups in Canada, various theories of ethnicity are also helpful tools when analyzing the way in which the Norwegian-Canadian ethnicity has been reformulated. Particularly

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*: 31.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*: 31-32.

<sup>43</sup> Frances Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes: Ethno-Religious Identities and the Canadian Prairies* (Manitoba: University of Manitoba Press, 2010), 8.

<sup>44</sup> Department of Justice. Government of Canada. Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988), c. 24 (4th Supp.), 3. 1d accessed February 25, 1988, <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/PDF/Statute/C/C-18.7.pdf>.



useful in this thesis is Herbert Gans' concept of "symbolic ethnicity," which claims that later generations no longer need to be part of an ethnic group, but instead choose to feel ethnic. Norwegian Canadians fit within this larger picture. Gans further argues that ethnic groups in the United States are assimilated to a great degree, but this thesis somewhat disagrees with this view and claims, like Wsevolod Isajiw, that assimilation and cultural retention are not mutually exclusive processes.<sup>45</sup> The Norwegian-Canadian ethnic identity contained, and still contains, aspects of both adaptation and retention, and although their ethnicity largely had become symbolic by the 1970s it still held great importance to them.

## **Methods and Sources**

The main method applied in this thesis is a historical, qualitative approach with a main focus on textual analysis. As mentioned before, little is written about Norwegian immigration to Canada, which means that there are few secondary sources concerning the topic in general. However, there are a great number of books and articles written about the prairie west, immigration to Canada and immigration in general. This thesis is partly based on a close reading of some of these materials, and especially the more recent views on ethnic cultures, adaptation and reformulation of ethnic identities. However, a close reading of primary sources, local histories and church histories are also important in explaining how Norwegian Canadians have created a distinct ethnic identity. This combination of various written sources is valuable because they relate stories about immigration in general and Norwegian immigrants in particular. Together the sources paint a picture of the immigrants' experiences. What they faced when they came to western Canada and how they coped with their new existence exemplify how a distinct new identity developed and evolved. When relevant, their experiences are also compared to a few other immigrant groups, such as the other Scandinavian groups, the Ukrainians, and Norwegians in the United States. In some instances the experiences were similar, and as a result concurring western identities arose. In other instances, however, it is evident that Norwegian Canadians differed from other ethnic groups.

Some of the primary sources that are used in this thesis are personal memoirs. Ellenor Ranghild Merriken's memoirs were published in 1999, but written in 1960, and they illustrate

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<sup>45</sup> Herbert J. Gans, "Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups in America," in *Theories of Ethnicity: A Classical Reader*, ed. Werner Sollors (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1996), 425-459; and Wsevolod W. Isajiw, "Multiculturalism and the Integration of the Canadian Community," *Canadian Ethnic Studies/Etudes ethniques au Canada*, vol. 15, no. 2 (1983): 107-117, accessed February 22, 2011, <http://pao.chadwyck.com/login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/articles/displayItemPage.do?FormatType=fulltextimages&BackTo=journalid&QueryType=articles&QueryIndex=journal&ResultsID=12E4768DA3BE32D99&ItemNumber=8&PageNumber>.

how she and her family struggled to make a new home on the Canadian prairies.<sup>46</sup> Personal stories, like Merriken's, must always be handled carefully. She wrote the stories from her memory of them, and her views could also have been coloured by her move to the United States, initiated by her husband. Sigurd Arthur Sorenson's *My Memoirs* is thus also dealt with in a cautious manner. His story is different from Merriken's in that it was written 45 years later, in 1995. In addition, Sorenson went to school in both Norway and Canada and visited Norway on numerous occasions. Yet, there are still similarities between them, but Sorenson's memoirs are more useful than Merriken's in the discussion about the reformulated Norwegian-Canadian identity in chapter four. There is always a risk involved when one is analyzing primary sources that are based on people's memories, but they are also the best sources we have in terms of finding out how people identified with their new country and surroundings. Thus, these sources are used, but the information is combined with secondary material on Norwegian immigrants, other ethnic groups, or general historical tendencies in Canada at the time the memoirs were written. In order to more truly understand the emergence and reformulation of a Norwegian-Canadian identity it is vital to include such personal stories, but one must always be aware of the risks involved in such an undertaking.

Other important written sources are the Canadian Norwegian-language newspapers *Vikingen*, *Norrøna* and *Vancouver Posten*. These newspapers are interesting since they provide insight into what the Norwegian Canadians in western Canada found important, as well as how they viewed themselves in regards to other ethnic groups. Through their articles and focus, a distinct Norwegian-Canadian identity can be traced. However, it is somewhat difficult to generalize from *Vikingen* because we do not know if it was ever published. It was written in Edmonton between 1911 and 1914, yet although the two handwritten volumes that have been found refer to *Vikingen* as a newspaper, mention the price of subscription and advertisements, and mention an alleged printer strike in 1912, no printed copy has ever been found to verify that the paper was actually published and in circulation.<sup>47</sup> Professor Christopher Hale at the University of Alberta believes the paper was handwritten and circulated to the members of the Scandinavian Youth Society, where each member could write a contribution, and pass it on to the next member.<sup>48</sup> This obviously amounts to some credibility issues. However, the fact that members of a Scandinavian Youth Society in

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<sup>46</sup> Victoria Boynton and Jo Malin, eds., *Encyclopedia of Women's Autobiography*, Vol. 1 A-J (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group Inc, 2005), 140.

<sup>47</sup> Per Anders Rudling, "A Paper for the Scandinavians in Edmonton: The Norwegian Immigrant Experience in Alberta as Recorded in the Norwegian-Language Paper *Vikingen*", *Scandinavian-Canadian Studies/Études Scandinaves Au Canada* Vol. 16 (2005-2006): 68.

<sup>48</sup> Conversation with Professor Christopher Hale about *Vikingen*, Edmonton, Canada, September 24, 2010.

Edmonton would write the two volumes is interesting in itself, regardless of whether or not it was ever published since it shows that their heritage was important to them. Also, when compared to the other two newspapers it becomes evident that they shared many similarities.

Other types of written sources that are used in this thesis are the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in combination with other government documents on cultural policy, and minutes, correspondence and budgets of the Solglyt Lodge, the Edmonton chapter of the Norwegian organization the Sons of Norway. These sources are essential in chapter three and four, which deal with the Multiculturalism Policy, its aims and impact on Canadian Norwegians and other ethnic groups, as well as the reformulated Norwegian-Canadian identity. Secondary material on the Multiculturalism Policy is also relevant in this discussion because it reveals the historical backdrop as well as the government's aims and stance to Canada's ethnically diverse nature. The budgets and minutes help shed light on the practical implications of the policy for this particular ethnic group, although they only provide insight into one specific organization consisting of members with a great involvement. Consequently, it can be difficult to make conjectures on behalf of all Norwegian Canadians from this one lodge. On the other hand, the lodge has been one of the most visible Norwegian ethnic organizations in Edmonton and has therefore been especially targeted and influenced by the Multiculturalism Policy.

Although this thesis mainly focuses on written materials, oral history is another method that is used. Written accounts, such as memoirs, are important in chapter two when it is nearly impossible to talk to the actual immigrants. However, the thesis is concerned with the Norwegian-Canadian identity per se and not just identity formation among first generation immigrants, which is why interviews are an important source in chapter four where the reformulation of a Norwegian-Canadian identity is discussed. Interviews with six members, three women and three men, of the Solglyt Lodge, Sons of Norway, were conducted in October 2010 and March 2011, and they are used to shed light on how Norwegian Canadians today perceive their ethnic heritage. The three women were interviewed in Edmonton, Alberta, by use of a semi-structured, informal interview, whereas the three men were interviewed by email correspondence. The interviewees were in their sixties and seventies and belonged to an especially active ethnic core by being members of the lodge. Unfortunately, due to time constraints it proved challenging to find Norwegian Canadians to interview without an affiliation with the lodge. As such, the interviews may not be representative for Norwegian Canadians as a whole. On the other hand, the interviewees were representative of the members of the lodge, which was run and attended mostly by women and men in the

interviewees' age group, and as mentioned the lodge was especially targeted by the government policy. Subsequently, the interviews can still be used to determine how some Norwegian Canadians perceive themselves today, thereby establishing what the reformulated Norwegian-Canadian identity looked, and still looks, like. Interviews are beneficial because they can be a valuable addition to written accounts, fill in gaps and give the people under study a voice. On the other hand, it must be remembered that answers may vary depending on how the questions are asked and the setting in which they are asked. In this study, the men were given the chance to reflect upon the questions and spend time formulating their answers, whereas the women had no such chance. On the other hand, due to the semi-structural form of the interviews, the women could easily answer any follow-up questions and clear up misunderstandings, as well as contribute with additional information and ask questions themselves. The use of interviews can undoubtedly also prove challenging. The interviewees may, for instance, say what they believe the interviewer wants to hear, and thus not provide their own true opinion. In addition, personal memory is not always reliable, thereby making the interviews challenging to assess.<sup>49</sup> Again, these are all sources of error that must be taken into account, but since this study analyzes people's personal identity it is important to include their own insights as well. Thus, it is believed that the positives outweigh the negatives; interviews cannot be completely disregarded on the basis of possible sources of error.

In addition to interviews, personal participation at two lodge meetings and a research trip to two former Norwegian settlements, New Norway and Camrose, are methods that have been used in this thesis. The participation at lodge meetings was essential because it shed light on how the organization worked and who the members were. The lodge does have members in all age ranges, but elderly and retired people tend to be the most active, which again could amount to some questions about the validity of the source.<sup>50</sup> One may suggest that the lodge is merely a retirement activity for first generation immigrants, and that the interest in maintaining a Norwegian heritage in Canada is dwindling. As the thesis will show, however, members of the lodge clearly worried about the lack of interest among adolescents, yet, many of the members were later generation Norwegian Canadians. Thus, it may seem like interest in one's heritage comes with age, and that participation in the lodge is a genuine interest and not just a retirement activity. The research trip to New Norway and Camrose was useful in

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<sup>49</sup> For an elaborate discussion of the advantages and challenges regarding the use of interviews and other oral sources, see for example Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

<sup>50</sup> Information received by personal correspondence with Kenneth Domier, member and former president of Solglyt Lodge, March 8, 2011.

that the towns provided insight into how former Norwegian settlements commemorate their heritage today. Instead of just reading about the areas which were settled by Norwegians, it proved helpful to see what the areas were like and what aspects of Norwegian culture they had maintained.

## ***Terminology***

When discussing Norwegian Canadians' identity formation and reformulation, the term *Norwegian Canadian(s)* is evidently important. This term refers in this thesis to all Canadians of Norwegian descent, unless something else is clearly stated. Several of the immigrants came to Canada directly from Norway, whereas others migrated from the United States. Some of the immigrants were born in Norway, some in Canada, and yet others were born in America. A great number of the American migrants came from Norwegian settlements in the western United States, thus being born in America did not necessarily lead to a weak identification with one's Norwegian heritage.<sup>51</sup> This illustrates the complexity of the group, which is why *Norwegian Canadian* must refer to all Canadians of Norwegian descent, and not be limited to the first generation immigrants. In the nineteenth century, there were in some instances generational conflicts within the group that showed a breach in thought between the first and second generation immigrants. Although some immigrants felt, and still feel, closer to Norway than Canada and vice versa, all of them share(d) the same ethnic heritage and they were, and are, in different ways trying to adapt to Canadian society. Thus, *Norwegian Canadian* is a multifaceted term which includes a number of different personalities, but in spite of their differences they had in common that they identified with this ethnic group.

Another important term is *multiculturalism*. Canada has been a multicultural country since the late nineteenth century when scores of immigrants from different parts of Europe settled there. Throughout the twentieth century, the doors were opened to immigrants from all over the world. Immigration created a distinct prairie character, coloured by all the ethnic groups who lived side by side.<sup>52</sup> It would be futile to attempt to tell the story of Norwegian Canadians without mentioning the multicultural nature of the society in which they lived and interacted. Thus, the term *multiculturalism* refers to this diversity in the west, not to the policy that was declared by the Canadian federal government in the 1970s. However, when the policy, and not Canada's multicultural nature, is discussed with regards to a reformulated

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<sup>51</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 41-44.

<sup>52</sup> Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes*, 6.

Norwegian-Canadian identity, this is clearly stated. Canada did not become multicultural in the 1970s. In fact, “[w]hile taking care not to overstate the case, the multiculturalism that existed in the West – decades before Ottawa declared a more toothless version the cornerstone of Canadian identity – touched the core of the regional society.”<sup>53</sup> Therefore, making a distinction between Canadian multiculturalism per se and the Multiculturalism Policy is important.

## **Structure**

The thesis starts by examining the new realities the Norwegian immigrants were facing when they came to Canada, and their responses to their new lives. Based on their particular responses, chapter two argues that a distinct Norwegian-Canadian western identity was formed, even though the settlers lost hallmarks of their identity such as the language during the 1930s and 1940s. Furthermore, the first part of chapter three argues that as a result of the Great Depression and World War Two, Norwegian Canadians were markedly less active and seem to have become more acculturated than before. The chapter further argues that with the debates leading up to the initiation of the Multiculturalism Policy in 1971 Norwegian Canadians became more involved again. As a result of the policy, its financial support and public acknowledgment of ethnic groups in Canada, Norwegian Canadians did again become interested in commemorating their heritage and contributing cultural aspects to the rest of Canadian society. Chapter four illustrates how Norwegian Canadians in Alberta, with a main focus on Edmonton, have reformulated their ethnic identity since the initiation of the Multiculturalism Policy. It argues that the Norwegian-Canadian ethnic identity to a large extent has become symbolic, yet it still holds great importance to them. The final chapter, chapter five, outlines the main findings in chapters two to four, and concludes that a distinct Norwegian-Canadian identity was formed and has been reformulated, as a result of the Multiculturalism Policy, in western Canada.

## **Concluding Remarks**

Norwegian Canadians were struggling to maintain a Norwegian heritage in Canada when they first settled. Through various institutions and fellowships, they managed to become a distinct ethnic group that kept traditions alive, but the strength of the group faded during the difficult war years and the Depression. However, the multiculturalism discussions and policies that emerged in the 1960s and into the 1970s led to an ethnic resurgence among

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

Canadians of Norwegian heritage. Again, a dual Norwegian-Canadian identity became apparent. The words that were proclaimed in a poem on the official opening of the Scandinavian Centre in 1964 bear witness of this:

They are all here today to join in friendship  
For the country they came from  
And with love for the country they live in.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Sigurd Sorenson, *My Memoirs* (Edmonton: Unpublished memoirs, 1995), 155.

## Chapter Two: A Need for Community and Belonging: Accommodation and the Development of a Norwegian-Canadian Identity to the 1930s.

Norwegian immigrants to Canada had to adapt to a new life in a different country. In many instances they found themselves surrounded by other ethnic groups, as well as Norwegians from other part of Norway than themselves. In the Pemukan and Monitor district in Alberta, for instance, Norwegians from districts as different as Numedal in eastern Norway and Ålesund in western Norway shared the same fate.<sup>1</sup> In many instances, local isolation had created prejudiced stereotypes of Norwegians from other regions of the country, but now they found themselves living in the same Canadian region. Some Norwegian immigrants' identity was initially closer tied to their home region than the country itself, although they still kept the sense of being Norwegian.<sup>2</sup> The social anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen has argued that regional identities are quite common, but when one meets fellow countrymen abroad, the identity frequently shifts to a national identity. This is because ethnic identity often is situational.<sup>3</sup> This seems to fit with the Norwegian immigrants to Canada. Despite of different dialects, political and religious affiliations, and occupations, they established institutions such as Lutheran churches, schools, ladies' aids, young peoples' leagues, ski groups, and newspapers, which helped them adapt to Canadian society. This chapter argues that a distinct Norwegian-Canadian identity was formed through these undertakings, although in many instances the organizations were aided by already well-established Norwegian institutions in America. Churches and organizations became important meeting places where Norwegians shared their language, culture and heritage, but also provided help in adapting to a Canadian way of life. The ethnic press highlighted Norwegian contributions to Canada, but also helped Norwegian settlers become accustomed to their new country. These institutions were also vital in bringing the Norwegian community together and they provided support and comfort to the newcomers. Although the use of Norwegian was gradually reduced, by 1930 the settlers had developed a distinct Norwegian-Canadian identity.

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<sup>1</sup> See Elaine Rutledge and Marion Liknes, *A Treasure of Memories: A Story of the Monitor and Pemukan Districts in Alberta, Canada* (Monitor: Monitor L.A.C.C., 1975); and Olaug Belcher, comp., *Norwegian Emigrants: "The Emigrant Stories From Norway to Canada"*. Unknown publication place and date, retrieved from the Norwegian National Library, Oslo, Norway, September 10, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Odd Sverre Løvoll, "The Bygdslag Movement," *Norwegian American Studies* Vol. 25 (1972): 22.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (London and New York: Pluto Press, 2010), 37.



## ***Hardships of Pioneering***

When we look at a map of western Canada we find that there are a number of towns that are marked by Norwegian settlers. Place names like Bardo, New Norway, Viking and Bergen bear witness to the needs people saw to make this new country seem like home. Names such as Bardo and Bergen fit nicely into the general naming trend on the prairies where immigrant groups named their towns after their local home communities.<sup>4</sup> Western Canada received immigrants from many European countries in this period. In fact, by 1901 about one third of the western population was foreign born. This, in itself, is a high number, but when it is compared with the number of foreign-born people in the rest of Canada, it becomes even more striking. Only three per cent of the population in the rest of Canada was born outside of Canada.<sup>5</sup> Due to the great number of foreign-born people in the west and the relatively small number of Norwegians in Canada, compared to the American counterpart, the Norwegian immigrants would in many instances find themselves scattered and separated from each other. Leaving the home country to settle in a foreign land was difficult for many. Nevertheless, they had to learn to cope with the new life they had chosen. Ellenor Ranghild Merriken tells the story of her family's life and how they struggled with the transition to Canadian society, and she explains that "[m]ama must have had a hard time getting used to the way of life on the prairie. She had known better times than we could possibly hope for on the homestead."<sup>6</sup> Merriken describes cold, harsh winters, in which supper would freeze before they were done eating and her brother cried because he was so cold.<sup>7</sup>

Life on the homestead was seldom easy, and one may wonder whether the settlers at times wondered what they were doing in this strange, far-away land, and whether it would be better going back home. In fact, migration studies show that after 1880 about 25 per cent of the Norwegian immigrants returned to Norway, but they were usually young, unmarried men who emigrated to find employment instead of a new life.<sup>8</sup> There are also tales of families who returned home to Norway, but left for Canada when the homeland proved unfulfilling yet again. This was the case for Sigurd Sorenson and his family. Bernt (Ben) Sorenson and Berthe (Stallemo) Sorenson left Norway for different reasons in 1898 and 1911, respectively, met in Canada and fell in love. They got married in 1912, and had a son, Sigurd, and a daughter, Anne, within the next few years. Their plan was to prove up their homestead in a couple of

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<sup>4</sup> Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes*, 69.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>6</sup> Merriken, *Looking for Country*, 71.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>8</sup> Ingrid Semmingsen, *Norway to America. A History of the Migration* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1978), 120.

years, sell it, and return to Norway. Due to World War I their plans were put on hold, but in 1920, the plans were finally realized. Ben Sorenson and his father were going to build a new home, yet, the family was struck by a disaster when the half-finished home burned to the ground. Ben Sorenson was tired of the family's misfortune and by 1923, the family had returned to Canada.<sup>9</sup> The story of the Sorensens sheds light on the many reasons why people left, and why they also chose to stay in Canada despite of difficulties and hard times. To remove some of the foreignness from the world surrounding them, many settlers brought items such as trunks, spinning wheels, books and utensils over from Norway. These items, then, served both practical functions as well as psychological benefits.<sup>10</sup> Merriken explains that in the midst of troubles, her mother would caution them "to hold on to what culture [they] had inherited and no matter how far [they] were from people or civilization, never to let [them]selves down."<sup>11</sup> Evidently, there seems to have been something in the shared culture that could brighten up their day and make them stronger, even on days that seemed long, cold and lonely.

Despite the relatively low number of Norwegian immigrants in western Canada, they did come together in order to create communities based on the shared bonds and culture they brought with them from their native land. The historian Frances Swyripa writes that Ukrainian and other Eastern European settlers recreated the functions of "the village and its services" in the west. In their home country the village had served a variety of important functions that they no longer had in Canada. Their answer to this problem was the invention of what she calls "a multitude of rural 'crossroads' clusters," among them being schools, churches, blacksmith shops and general stores.<sup>12</sup> Rural communities in Norway had also served important social functions, and on coming to certain settlements in western Canada, Norwegian settlers found themselves surrounded by Norwegians from different parts of the home country. Despite their differences they banded together, and established institutions which would serve important functions for the settlers and become essential in the creation of a Norwegian-Canadian identity.

### ***Church Organization and the Communal Function of the Church***

A great majority of the Norwegian settlers to Canada belonged to the Lutheran faith, but their backgrounds were still quite different. Some were members of the Norwegian State

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-45.

<sup>10</sup> Karhoffer, "Visions of New Land," 118-119.

<sup>11</sup> Merriken, *Looking for Country*, 71.

<sup>12</sup> Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes*, 28.

Church, others belonged to different free churches or lay movements, such as the Hauge movement.<sup>13</sup> As a result of this, at least five different synods were organized in Canada: the Norwegian Synod, the Hauge Synod, the United Norwegian Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Free Church, and the Lutheran Brethren Church.<sup>14</sup> One of the first Lutheran churches on the prairies was organized in 1899 in the home of Mrs. Marit Jevne in the Wetaskiwin district. A few families assembled together under the leadership of Rev. Ellestad, and they met in homes until they started building a church building in 1905.<sup>15</sup> In Camrose, the Messiah Lutheran Church was established in 1901 in the Spokkeli home. The church building itself, however, was erected four years later, in 1905.<sup>16</sup> This is the general pattern we find in other Norwegian settlements in western Canada as well. In most instances, settlers would gather in homes or school buildings to hear the Gospel preached, and this fellowship became immensely important. Although some of the immigrants were used to lay preachers, in many cases it was considered important to secure a pastor for the settlement. In the Glen Mary district, Saskatchewan, Norwegian immigrants were concerned because they did not have a pastor, and decided to send a letter to their former pastor in Minnesota where they asked for assistance. A letter was also sent to the superintendent of missions for the United Norwegian Lutheran Church, Pastor Holm, where they “pleaded with him to do all in his power to secure a pastor for them.”<sup>17</sup> This commitment shows the importance of the church for the early Norwegian settlers. The churches were essential to the community since they were not just religious centres, but important social centres as well.<sup>18</sup> Ragna Steen and Magda Hendrickson relate that the Bardo Church was “the centre of the spiritual, musical and social life of the community,” and this underlines the significance of these institutions for the Norwegian immigrants.<sup>19</sup> Royden Loewen explains that religious practice was vital to a great number of immigrant groups because it

provided the immigrants not only with a focal point of social interaction, but with a world view, a cosmology that explained the costly migration, a belief system that ordered their

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<sup>13</sup> An evangelistic mass movement which opposed the religious elite in the State church and believed in personal revival, egalitarianism and lay preaching. See for example Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 128.

<sup>14</sup> Harold Engen, “A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada” (BA thesis, Faculty of Luther Theological Seminary, Saskatoon, 1955), 4.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 12-13.

<sup>16</sup> “Camrose Lutheran Through Fifty Years 1901-1951: Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Camrose Lutheran Church,” information booklet about the Messiah Lutheran Church (Camrose: Messiah Lutheran Church, 1951), 8-11.

<sup>17</sup> Engen, “History of Evangelical Lutheran Church,” 24.

<sup>18</sup> Odd Lovoll, “Canada Fever: The Odyssey of Minnesota’s Bardo Norwegians,” *Minnesota History* 57/7 (2001): 365.

<sup>19</sup> Ragna Steen and Magda Hendrickson, *Pioneer Days in Bardo Alberta: Including Sketches of Early Surrounding Settlements* (Tofield: The Historical Society of Beaver Hills Lake, 1944), 189.

worlds, and, oftentimes, a set of sacred narratives that offered hope for the days beyond the difficult transition to the new world.<sup>20</sup>

This seems to hold true for the Norwegians in Canada as well, and is exemplified through the massive increase in Norwegian churches between 1905 and 1916. In Alberta alone, the numbers increased from twenty congregations in 1905 to 159 churches and twenty preaching places in 1916.<sup>21</sup> Churches were in many instances a constant in a chaotic and different life situation, and they provided comfort to a great number of their members.

In the early years of settlement, the churches became important arenas where the keeping and speaking of the Norwegian language was maintained. A Mrs. Willie Simonson relates that the people in her settlement of Stony Plain would drive ten miles on Sundays to attend a service in a German Lutheran church, in which they did not understand the language. When Rev. Bersvend Anderson came to the district she exclaims: “Oh, how welcome was Reverend Anderson’s coming, bringing us the Gospel in our own tongue!”<sup>22</sup> Having the sermon preached in Norwegian was valuable to her because she could now understand everything that was being said. Yet, taking part in a Norwegian service this far away from home could have been equally important as an identity marker for her and the other Norwegians from Stony Plain. The link between ethnicity, language and faith was a strong element in Scandinavian church life in the United States, according to Harald Runblom, and we see this in Canada as well.<sup>23</sup> This link was also evident in the Viking district. Pastors Klyve and Egedahl decided to go to communities further north of Viking “to see if they could find some of their own people up there.”<sup>24</sup> This they did, and the Norwegian settlers apparently started to cry when they heard the sermon preached by Pastor Egedahl.<sup>25</sup> This may have been one of first services these Norwegian immigrants had taken part in in Canada, and to have pastors preach to them in their mother tongue seems to have been a source of great joy and comfort. It is evident that it was an emotional meeting, and the establishment of a Norwegian congregation seems to have been a great addition to their community. It is also noteworthy that the pastors went on a mission to find “some of their own people.” This shows that the Lutheran faith was closely linked to Norwegians’ ethnicity and identity. The pastors did not set out just to preach the gospel, but to preach to Norwegian settlers.

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<sup>20</sup> Loewen and Friesen, *Immigrants in Prairie Cities*, 13-14.

<sup>21</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 140.

<sup>22</sup> Steen and Hendrickson, *Pioneer Days in Bardo*, 104.

<sup>23</sup> Hans Norman and Harald Runblom, *Transatlantic Connections: Nordic Migration to the New World after 1800* (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1988), 196-197.

<sup>24</sup> Engen, “History of Evangelical Lutheran Church,” 45.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

The Lutheran churches served many different functions. They could help settlers find meaning and hope in their new homeland, host social functions and retain an important social role, and, until the late 1930s and 1940s, create a little taste of Norway within Canada through the use of Norwegian in the services. According to Gulbrand Loken, all Norwegian settlements established churches, because they saw the need for them and “felt that the community was incomplete without a church.”<sup>26</sup> This further suggests that their Norwegian identity was closely linked to the Lutheran faith. Even in settlements that lacked a preaching place, the importance of their Christian faith is striking. Ellenor Merriken narrates that grace was said before and after every meal, and that she and her brother had to study both Bible history and the catechism. This knowledge was to be learned well enough to be recited by heart.<sup>27</sup> One may argue that religion per se became more important because it would be the only constant in their lives at this time. Nevertheless, this is an example which shows that the Lutheran faith was particularly important to the Norwegian settlers. In a settlement where a lot of Norwegians lived, Lutheran churches would be formed quite rapidly, but even in a remote area on the prairie with no such meeting place the children were taught to say grace and learn the catechism by heart. In 1925, Ellenor Merriken took her own family to Camrose for the week-long celebration of the Lutheran Church’s centennial, which suggests that she identified with the church and wanted to pass this on to her children.<sup>28</sup> Local histories also relate stories of Norwegian families that organized churches and regularly came together for worship.<sup>29</sup> The churches seem to be one of the main components of their new western-Canadian identity. From the church, other activities sprung up, it was the place in which they met other Norwegians and Norwegian was the language of the church. They could have chosen to attend other churches, but, although some Norwegian immigrants did, it was vital for many that they had a Lutheran church to attend.

On the other hand, the Lutheran churches in Canada were closely linked to their American counterparts. A large number of Norwegians came to Canada via the United States where churches had been established. The United Lutheran Church of America provided a lot of support as well as pastors to the Canadian settlement churches, which resulted in a close relationship between American and Canadian churches. When three of the biggest Lutheran congregations in 1917 merged into the Norwegian Lutheran Church of Canada, they applied

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<sup>26</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 136.

<sup>27</sup> Merriken, *Looking for Country*, 72-73.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>29</sup> See Helen Lindroth, comp., *We Came and We Stayed: Accounts of the Pioneers, Their Descendants, and Other Residents of Bawlf, Alberta, and Surrounding Districts* (Camrose: Gospel Contact Press, 1980), 39; and Rutledge and Liknes, *A Treasure of Memories*, 493-494.

to become an integral part of the Norwegian Lutheran Church of America, but as a separate legal entity.<sup>30</sup> This clearly shows the close relationship between Norwegian Americans and Norwegian Canadians, however, it is evident that the Canadian churches wanted some form of autonomy as well. With time, the ties to the American Lutheran church were severed and the use of Norwegian in services was lost, but the Church itself survived. Thus, Norwegians adapted to the Canadian mainstream culture, but held on to an important constant and sense of community in their lives. We can see this blending of cultures as part of their response to their new lives in Canada.

### ***Norwegian Canadians and Schools***

The other main institution that Norwegian immigrants were concerned about was schools. Education was of great importance to them, and parents realized the necessity of educating their children if they wanted them to succeed in Canadian society. The school system served two main functions. First, it introduced the English language, which aided Norwegians' accommodation to Canadian society. Second, it united Norwegians in western Canada through their efforts to establish and build schools. The immigrants' mastering of English was often used as a definite sign of assimilation. However, schools did not just assimilate the Norwegian immigrants. School building drew communities together, thus it is important to note the double nature of the school system; it also served as a unifier.

One of the first things the settlers had to learn was of course the English language. Some settlers had no knowledge of this language upon entering, and had to find their way through Canada with the use of sign language. Their relief was often great when they met someone who spoke Norwegian.<sup>31</sup> Once they were established on their homesteads, there was a general consensus that it was important to secure both money and a plot of land for a school. The importance of education among Norwegians was to some extent a result of their Lutheran faith. In order to gain a personal faith and understanding of Scripture, learning to read and write at an early age was essential. In addition to the public school system, Christian instruction of the Bible, catechism, bible history, and hymns was offered at home and by the church when the children were confirmed. Thus, most of the Norwegian immigrants had gone to school and also been educated by the church and their parents, and education was a core component in their lives.<sup>32</sup> Some of the settlers had obtained higher education, but found that they were not allowed to put their knowledge into use in their new country. Ellenor

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<sup>30</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 135-141.

<sup>31</sup> Lindroth, *We Came and We Stayed*, 37.

<sup>32</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 130.

Merriken's mother, for instance, was a licensed baby doctor in Norway, but was not given a Canadian license.<sup>33</sup> This may have contributed to her view on education, and we learn from Ellenor Merriken's memoirs that education was important. One winter, while being snowed in, her father functioned as her arithmetic and reading teacher and her mother as the religion teacher.<sup>34</sup> These two types of knowledge seem to have gone hand in hand. Sigurd Sorenson also relates how education was important to his parents. When the family returned to Norway, he struggled with his schoolwork because he had forgotten his Norwegian. The principal thought his poor results amounted to laziness, but Sorenson's mother intervened and the situation gradually improved.<sup>35</sup> It was essential to show the principal that her son valued education, and that the language barrier was the real issue.

By looking at the formation of schools and members of school boards in different settlements and districts, we see that many Norwegians were closely involved. When Allied School was organized in Allied, Alberta in 1919, Tom Hagen was elected chairman. He and his wife had emigrated from Norway to North Dakota, and in 1903 they settled northeast of Bawlf, together with a great number of other Norwegians coming in from the Dakotas.<sup>36</sup> In Claresholm, Alberta, we also find a Norwegian immigrant, Ole Jacob Amundsen, among the first members of the school board.<sup>37</sup> O. J. Amundsen even became an immigrant agent for Canada, both in North Dakota and directly in Norway.<sup>38</sup> Norwegians were prominent in the formation and support of schools in a number of districts. It shows their concern about education for their children, and in some settlements this concern brought settlers together regardless of ethnic background. To the north of Viking, Alberta, Norwegians took settlements, and south-west of Viking, a Czechoslovakian settlement, Prague, was formed. There, the Czechoslovakians were planning to establish a school. It is interesting to note that although Norwegians were a minority in this area, and the name clearly emphasizes the Czechoslovakian founders' background and history, Norwegian settlers were still active in the founding of the school. It is noteworthy that the first trustees of Prague School were H. O. Peterson, W. J. Ruzicka and O. Widdal.<sup>39</sup> Two out of three trustees of a school founded upon the wish of Czechoslovakians were of Norwegian heritage.

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<sup>33</sup> Merriken, *Looking for Country*, 107.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>35</sup> Sorenson, *My Memoirs*, 43.

<sup>36</sup> Lindroth, *We Came and We Stayed*, 34 and 39.

<sup>37</sup> E. R. Patterson, "The Pioneers of Claresholm," in *The Early History of the Town of Claresholm*, accessed November 18, 2010, [http://www.ourfutureourpast.ca/loc\\_hist/toc.aspx?id=1154](http://www.ourfutureourpast.ca/loc_hist/toc.aspx?id=1154), 4.

<sup>38</sup> Patterson, "Letter," *Early History of Claresholm*, 1-2.

<sup>39</sup> Herbert B. Collier, *Remember When? History of the Viking District*, accessed November 18, 2010, <http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/bibliography/6075.html>, 14-16.

One can see this as an example of how the Norwegian immigrants accommodated willingly to Canada, and saw themselves and their neighbours as citizens of a multicultural Canada who had to cooperate to create a promising future for their families. Education and mastering of English was then important. Gulbrand Loken argues that Norwegians were quickly assimilated, due to the loss of their language, but this can be easily overstated. Learning English was certainly a sign of accommodation, but in other ways Norwegians retained a sense of Norwegian identity. The Norwegian settlers' involvement in the establishment of Prague School could also be a direct result of their Norwegian culture. With the emphasis put on school and education in Norwegian culture, especially due to their Lutheran faith and the confirmation classes, Norwegian settlers' involvement in the founding of schools should not simply be seen as a symbol of assimilation. Instead it is likely that the wish to found schools contained an element of both Norwegian culture and adaptation. Education was highly valued in the Norwegian culture and thus the founding of schools was influenced by this. Yet, the Canadian government emphasized that immigrants should become loyal British subjects, and the schools were seen as pertinent to the assimilation policies.<sup>40</sup> The sociologist Herbert J. Gans has argued that ethnic identity among later generations has become symbolic, whereas in the first and second generations the institutions that were established were seen as a necessity. As a result, the settlers did not always express their identity in a visible manner.<sup>41</sup> The Norwegian school-building efforts are clear examples of this. The schools' outlook was seldom ethnic, but they were established because Norwegian settlers saw a need for education. Furthermore, there is at times a tendency to look at settlers as emigrants rather than immigrants, where the focus is on their sentimentality concerning what they left at home.<sup>42</sup> The active involvement in building schools, both strictly Norwegian and schools of a more multicultural nature, indicates that everyday life in the new community concerned Norwegian settlers more than sentimental thoughts about what they had left behind. For the most part, they were working hard to create a new life for themselves on the Canadian prairies, and in this schools were essential.

The wish to establish schools extended to institutions of higher education as well. Not only were the settlers fixed on building local schools for their children, but already in the beginning of the twentieth century a number of Norwegians started debating the possibilities of founding a Norwegian Lutheran College. Their wish was influenced by Norwegian-

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<sup>40</sup> Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 290.

<sup>41</sup> Gans, "Symbolic Ethnicity," 425.

<sup>42</sup> Orm Øverland, "Hjemlandsmyter. Om skaping av gamle røtter i et nytt land," in "Migrasjon og tilpasning. Ingrid Semmingsen. Et Minneseminar," *Tid og Tanke*, no. 3 (1998): 143-144.



Americans and the various colleges they had established in the United States.<sup>43</sup> Such an institution would be able to provide their children with deeper knowledge and consequently prepare them for University studies. In addition, a Norwegian Lutheran college in Canada would be important because there was a lack in trained pastors in the Canadian congregations. In 1910, Camrose Lutheran College was founded, and the first school year started on October 2, 1911.<sup>44</sup> In addition, in 1915, a Lutheran College, Outlook College, was established in Outlook, Saskatchewan.<sup>45</sup> Camrose Lutheran College would function as an educational institution for future pastors of the Norwegian Lutheran Church in Canada, but also as an institution of “liberal education in the arts and sciences” and “education, whether general, professional or technical.”<sup>46</sup> The school offered high school courses in addition to some college courses. Some of the classes were based on the Danish Grundtvigian folk high school principles, where theoretical knowledge and practical skills were taught in conjunction. This gave the college a certain Scandinavian approach, and the language of instruction was also Norwegian in the first years.<sup>47</sup> It is worth noting, though, that the founders did not think of it in terms of an isolated Norwegian college. On the official opening day in 1912, the *Camrose Canadian* reported on the remarks made by the Chairman of the Board, J. R. Lavik. He said that all education must start from Christian principles, and this wish was deeply ingrained in the Norwegian people. Yet, he continued to say that “while they were Norwegians, they wished also to be Canadians, and to be familiar with the English language.”<sup>48</sup>

Lavik’s speech was followed through by the establishment of a “Newcomer Course” in 1914, which focused on the English language in combination with Canadian civics and “an orientation to life in rural areas of the Prairies.”<sup>49</sup> The college, then, would help Norwegian immigrants become accustomed to Canadian, and especially western Canadian, ways of life in addition to a focus on religious instruction and Norwegian language classes. There is an indication that both the rural schools and the colleges were wanted by the Norwegian community to teach their children religious and Norwegian values in order for them to become good Canadians. Some parents were afraid of a total Canadianization of their children where Norwegian language and culture would be lost, but through Norwegian-Canadian school initiatives there could be a balance. The blending of cultures seems to have been

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<sup>43</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 131.

<sup>44</sup> Vincent Erikson, “A Seventy Fifth Anniversary: History of Camrose Lutheran College” (Camrose: Camrose Lutheran College, 1986), 1-3.

<sup>45</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 154.

<sup>46</sup> Erikson, “Seventy Fifth Anniversary,” 3.

<sup>47</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 146-152.

<sup>48</sup> As quoted in Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 148.

<sup>49</sup> Vincent Erikson, “Seventy Fifth Anniversary,” 4.

desirable. Especially the newcomer course at Camrose Lutheran College suggests that a Norwegian-Canadian prairie identity was emerging.

### ***Other Social Movements: Ladies' Aids, Youth Groups, Ski Clubs and Festivals.***

Other groups and organizations also emerged from the pioneer churches and schools. Almost every congregation established ladies' aids groups. These groups served different functions, but in many instances the ladies' aids worked faithfully and contributed large amounts of money to ensure the erection of schools and church buildings. For instance, the Hegre ladies' aid raised money for the new church that was built in 1915 by organizing picnics. It is worth noting that the Hegre ladies' aid started meeting as early as 1905, although the congregation itself was established in 1908.<sup>50</sup> This shows that these organizations served as an important meeting place for the settler women, also outside of the regular church community. Through these groups, they could achieve great things such as building churches, but they could also meet with other women and share their stories. Ragna Steen and Magda Hendrickson relate an interesting story of the Bardo ladies' aid that was organized in March 1898. One of the reasons why the women wanted such an organization was that "they soon felt the urge to continue in the church and community work to which they were accustomed."<sup>51</sup> The men, on the other hand, ridiculed the idea because there would be no use for it in a remote area with "neither people nor money."<sup>52</sup> However, they were soon to prove the men wrong, because in the fall of 1898 they had their first bazaar which generated \$60, of which a donation of \$50 was given to the school district straight away.<sup>53</sup> In a few years they managed to raise money to be spent on a church building, furnace and important inventory. In 1909 the church was finally erected, and the work the ladies had put down yielded great results.<sup>54</sup>

These women joined forces in order to maintain a tradition they were used to from home. Steen and Hendrickson's book demonstrates that the women wanted to take an active part in their community since it was something they had always done. Coming mainly from the small town of Bardo, Norway, these women had been active in their community, and needed this involvement in order to feel at home in Canada. Their success must also have prompted their actions, because not only did they contribute to the building of one church;

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<sup>50</sup> Lindroth, *We Came and We Stayed*, 142-143.

<sup>51</sup> Steen and Hendrickson, *Pioneer Days in Bardo*, 112.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 112-114.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

they raised money which made it possible to build a new church within a year when the old church burned to the ground in 1921. In addition, they supported missions both at home and abroad, and aided schools and other important educational institutions, such as the Camrose Lutheran College.<sup>55</sup>

In addition to being an organization that generated money for important projects, it must be noted that these women planned, organized, worked together and met with each other frequently. Ladies' aids were not a strictly Lutheran phenomenon, but existed in other churches and denominations as well.<sup>56</sup> Still, it is highly likely that the meetings in the first years of settlement were important for these women as a small community which provided them with a sense of identity. The feeling of uprootedness could often ensue when people left their home country and well-known institutions and customs behind. Janice Dickin notes that some people "found themselves inadvertently 'freed' from customs and comforts they thought – wrongly – they would be able to reproduce in this new country," and emigration then often resulted in a feeling of loneliness and sadness.<sup>57</sup> When Norwegian settler women met in such organizations, they not only worked for the common good and important causes, but they met with women who knew how difficult emigration could be; women who shared their background, culture and language, and who had chosen or been forced to leave their former lives behind. Steen and Hendrickson relate stories of women who would let nothing get in their way of attending these meetings. They would usually walk there, and bad weather, cold, heavy snow or sloughs could not stop them from going.<sup>58</sup> Looking at how tough and lonesome living on the prairie could be for a great number of immigrants, it is no wonder that women would walk for miles to attend the meetings. It seems as though the ladies' aids were just as important for the women themselves as for the community at large. These groups contributed greatly to the building of institutions that would make the new land seem like home, but they also gave the women a chance to confide in others who shared many of the same experiences. In addition, they were allowed to work for a common good, reach goals and make a difference in their community. These groups served important empowering functions for the women, and helped maintain a sense of identity for those who were used to this type of work from their hometown in Norway. Although these groups never became

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>56</sup> Palmer and Palmer, *Alberta: A New History*, 105.

<sup>57</sup> Janice Dickin, introduction to *Looking for Country: A Norwegian Immigrant's Alberta Memoir*, by Ellenor Ranghild Merriken (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1999), 5.

<sup>58</sup> Steen and Hendrickson, *Pioneer Days in Bardo*, 114.

official organizations that concerned themselves with maintaining Norwegian ideas, culture and traditions, they became important at the community level.

In addition to ladies' aids, a great number of congregations organized youth groups and societies for the younger members of their church. In Bardo, a society for small girls called the "Busy Bee Band" was organized by the ladies' aid in 1899. It was based on the same principles as the ladies' aid, which meant that they tried to collect money to support the local community, as well as missions and other forms of relief.<sup>59</sup> These girls would come together and knit, bake and make plans as to how they could raise the most money towards their projects. Other *ungdomsforbund* (young people's leagues) were also established in the beginning of the twentieth century. Some of these groups would play an important part in the church as well, and for example support missionaries. They also organized larger, mostly biannual, conventions where young people could meet.<sup>60</sup> As life in Canada became easier, families frequently found it more difficult to maintain their distinct culture. Different ethnic groups lived side by side, the children went to school where assimilation was the main governmental goal, and children born in Canada saw Canada as their home and made friends with children outside their ethnic group. This was of great concern to families in many ethnic groups, and oftentimes the mothers would see it as their responsibility to teach their children their language and traditions.<sup>61</sup> Societies modelled on ladies' aids were one particular response by Norwegian ladies.

However, with time the young people's leagues changed, and adolescents chose their own path during the early twentieth century. In 1934, the Busy Bee Band in Bardo changed its name to the Lutheran Daughters of the Reformation (LDR) and thus became part of the international organization by the same name.<sup>62</sup> This was a striking difference between the two societies in Bardo. The ladies' aid was strictly a local measure, whereas the young girls' society took on a more formal role. One may suggest that this resulted from the younger generation being more removed from the cultural aspect of their organization. Whereas the first generation of immigrants found personal comfort through their local society, the younger girls wanted to achieve something grander and did not need this type of comfort. Still, there are numerous accounts of ladies' aids that contributed large sums of money to both foreign missions and relief work and managed to combine their grand effort with their other functions. Even so, it is evident that the need for an ethnic meeting place declined as time

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 116-118.

<sup>60</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 143.

<sup>61</sup> Burnet and Palmer, "Coming Canadians," 89.

<sup>62</sup> Steen and Hendrickson, *Pioneer Days in Bardo*, 118-119.

passed. These young people were born in Canada, often spoke English as their first language, whereas their parents had come from Norway, spoke Norwegian, and had carried on a tradition they were used to from home. It is quite obvious that the two generations had both similar goals to obtain, but also quite dissimilar backgrounds. It is also worth noting that the Bardo LDR had to be discontinued when they were unable to recruit new members.<sup>63</sup> This further suggests that the groups' functions as distinct ethnic and cultural fellowships had diminished, and was considered less important by the younger generations, born in Canada. The fact that some of these local groups struggled with their recruitment could also be a result of the lack of founding myths and traditional stories about the Norwegians coming to Canada.<sup>64</sup> Without such myths, it was harder for parents to make their children proud of their heritage.

Yet, there were other ways in which Norwegian immigrants boasted of their heritage. Norwegians were highly involved with ski clubs and the promotion of skiing in Canada. Many of the settlers had learned how to make skis in Norway and brought this tradition with them to the new land.<sup>65</sup> Individuals would start ski clubs in their neighbourhoods and organize competitions to increase the popularity of the sport.<sup>66</sup> Herman Smith-Johannsen, the father of Canadian skiing, founded 27 ski clubs across the country and promoted the sport as "one thing Canadian families can do together."<sup>67</sup> The Norwegian-Canadian newspaper *Vikingen* devotes several articles to skiing and the impact Norwegians have had on Canadian sports, and it is evident that skiing was a source of pride to the writers. Ski tournaments hosted by the Edmonton ski club raised the status of the Norwegian sport in Canada, and young and old alike were active. According to the author, "skiing has proven that we have brought something from Norway and planted it on American soil, something that the Americans admire us for."<sup>68</sup> Another writer emphasized that skiing was something to be proud of, since it was the singularly most important Norwegian contribution that would give them a good reputation among other nationalities. Furthermore, a third article mentioned that skiing was

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<sup>63</sup> Unfortunately, Steen and Hendrickson do not state in which year the Bardo LDR was discontinued. See Steen and Hendrickson, *Pioneer Days in Bardo*, 119.

<sup>64</sup> Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes*, 80.

<sup>65</sup> Brunvand, *Norwegian Settlers in Alberta*, 43.

<sup>66</sup> See for example "Skisporten i Canada," in *Nordmannsforbundet*, no 6 (Kristiana (now: Oslo): Nordmands-Forbundets Hovedstyre, 1913), 145.

<sup>67</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 216-217.

<sup>68</sup> "Vår skjisport har bevist at vi har tat med noget fra Norge og overplantet det paa amerikansk grund som har de egenskaper ved sig at amerikanerne beundrer os for det." "Skjeturnamentet," *Vikingen*, No. 41, January 27, 1914, 67-69.

soon going to become the most popular winter sport in Canada.<sup>69</sup> Most ethnic groups took pride in their sports and transferred them to Canada. Athletics became part of their heritage and a way of holding the loyalty of their children, especially boys.<sup>70</sup> Through skiing, an essential part of the Norwegian culture was transplanted to Canada, and it was also passed on from the first to the second generation. The pride *Vikingen* demonstrates is understandable. The sport could not compete with ice hockey or curling in popularity, but it brought not only Norwegian immigrants, but communities together.

Another type of activity Norwegian immigrants managed to attract large crowds to, was their Norwegian festivals. The festivals also manifested the bond that existed between Norwegian immigrants in the United States and Canada. The United States had attracted a much larger portion of the Norwegian population than Canada, but when Camrose hosted a Norse Celebration in 1926, thousands of Norwegian Canadians from all over Canada in addition to Norwegian Americans attended. Similarly, a Norse Convention took place in Winnipeg in 1928 that attracted approximately 10,000 Norwegians from North America.<sup>71</sup> The festival in Camrose attracted the attention of the *Camrose Canadian* and several articles were written about it. According to the newspaper, the arts and crafts exhibition attracted the largest crowds, and, among other items, the hosts put on display musical instruments, wood carvings, traditional bridal costumes and *Hardangersøm* embroidery.<sup>72</sup> The artefacts chosen clearly show the diversity of Norwegian culture, and they bear witness of a strong sense of pride in their heritage. Perhaps even more striking was the exhibition of a miniature threshing machine, resembling the threshing machine that three Norwegian pioneers built in the early days of the Bardo settlement.<sup>73</sup> This can be seen as a symbol of the Norwegian pioneer spirit, and the threshing machine would emphasize to outsiders and Norwegians alike that Norwegians were instrumental in the building of this land. One important function of the festival, therefore, was to give Norwegians in Canada a boost in addition to showing other visitors their contributions to Canadian society. A second function of the festival was to join Norwegian Canadians together through *bygdelag* and *Nordmandsforbundet*.<sup>74</sup> However, both

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<sup>69</sup> "Ungdomsforeningen og skiklubben," *Vikingen*, No. 4, February 28, 1912, 42-43; and "Skisport," *Vikingen* No. 22, March 16, 1913, 201.

<sup>70</sup> Burnet and Palmer, "Coming Canadians," 218.

<sup>71</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 175-176.

<sup>72</sup> Embroidery distinct to the area of Hardanger in the western part of Norway.

<sup>73</sup> "Large Crowd Attracted by Norse Exhibits," *Camrose Canadian*, July 8, 1926.

<sup>74</sup> A *bygdelag* is a society where members from the same districts of Norway join together to celebrate their national distinctiveness. See Løvoll, "The Bygdelag Movement:" 9. *Nordmandsforbundet* is a Norwegian organization aimed at joining Norwegians all around the world together in the same association and promote Norwegian culture. See The Norse Federation, "The Norse Federation," accessed April 20, 2011, <http://www.norseman.no/page.aspx?id=15>

initiatives were relatively short-lived, lasting for only about ten years. According to Loken, *bygdelag* disappeared because of the Great Depression, and *Nordmandsforbundet* evidently could not compete with the *Sons of Norway*.<sup>75</sup>

### ***The Sons of Norway***

The Sons of Norway was established in Minneapolis on January 5, 1895, with an aim to provide Norwegians with financial help through an insurance program, in addition to maintaining the Norwegian language and culture. Thus, Sons of Norway is also an example of an ethnic institution that was established because the settlers had a genuine need for it, albeit with a clear ethnic focus. At the time of establishment, two resolutions were passed that said that all deliberations had to be carried out in Norwegian and that non-members were excluded from future meetings. The organization thus wanted to maintain a distinctly Norwegian outlook.<sup>76</sup> The Sons of Norway was a strictly secular fraternal organization, but the Daughters of Norway was established in 1897 to provide Norwegian-American women with a similar arena.<sup>77</sup> Although Norwegian settlers in Canada joined together in churches, communities, and in school-building initiatives, a similar organization to the Sons of Norway was not established. Despite the spread of the Sons of Norway in the United States, no attempts were made by the founders to extend their work to Canada. In fact, it was Norwegian Canadians who first came up with the idea of establishing a Canadian chapter of the Sons of Norway. Although the initiators wanted to be part of an American organization, it is interesting to note that they wanted the Canadian lodges to belong to a Canadian district. However, they were voted down and were instead given a general agency for the Canadian lodges with the first organizer being Jorgen Bjornestad.<sup>78</sup>

The Solglyt Lodge No. 143 in Edmonton was one of the first Sons of Norway lodges in Canada. It was established under the name Nordpolen in 1913, but by the end of World War I, the lodge became inactive because some of the members served in the military, others moved to different parts of Alberta.<sup>79</sup> The lodge was reorganized under a new name, Solglyt, in 1927, and women were now invited to join. Although the lodge only lasted for a few years when it was first established, it seems like the organization was much wanted by the Norwegian community in Edmonton and that it made great contributions. We learn from

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<sup>75</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 178.

<sup>76</sup> Sverre Norborg, *An American Saga* (Minneapolis: Sons of Norway, 1970), 34-35.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 110-111.

<sup>79</sup> "History of Sons of Norway in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada," provided by Kenneth Domier by email correspondence, October 13, 2010.

*Vikingen* that a wide variety of social gatherings were hosted by the lodge, such as *Syttende mai* celebrations, Christmas parties, and parties in remembrance of June 7, 1905.<sup>80</sup> In fact, according to one article, the Sons of Norway was the only organization that could unite and satisfy the Norwegian people in Edmonton. The article also implied that there was some disunity in the Norwegian community, but that on certain occasions, such as one of the Sons of Norway's meetings, the different churches, societies and ski clubs managed to come together and put such arguments aside.<sup>81</sup> That there was disunity in the community was also suggested by P. H. Baukhol in a letter to the Norwegian-American newspaper *Skandinaven* in 1913. However, he also argued that the Sons of Norway managed to unite most Norwegians in Edmonton, especially with their *mindegaveprosjekt*.<sup>82</sup> Even though the lodge became inactive by the end of the Great War it had evidently brought unity to the Norwegian community in Edmonton. Since then the lodge has been in operation.<sup>83</sup>

The Edmonton lodge worked towards preserving the Norwegian language and culture in Canada. On its year's-end celebration, for instance, a speech about the Norwegian language was delivered.<sup>84</sup> Thus, the organization was a staunch advocate of retaining a distinct Norwegian heritage, but it was also clear that they had a Canadian focus. In the 25 year anniversary publication by the 4<sup>th</sup> District of Sons of Norway, it is noted that H. E. Floen, the Vice President of the Edmonton lodge and Canadian organizer for many years, "at all times emphasized the necessity for a separate Canadian district irrespective of the decisions that have been taken by the United States of America."<sup>85</sup> The aspiration for a separate Canadian district was never abandoned. To date the only separate Canadian district is district 7, which consists of the lodges in British Columbia.<sup>86</sup> Sverre Norberg relates that when *Nordmandsforbundet* made its first contact with Norwegians in America, the Sons of Norway wanted to establish a form of cooperation. However, this did not amount to anything, and Norberg believes that "the cause may well have been that the leaders in Norway sensed that

<sup>80</sup> The date Norway withdrew from the union with Sweden.

<sup>81</sup> "Mindegavemødet," *Vikingen*, No. 39, December 2, 1913, 44-45.

<sup>82</sup> A project where Norwegians in America and Canada collected money towards a gift to Norway in the event of the centennial of the Norwegian constitution. "Peder H. Baukhol, "Fra Edmonton, Alta.: Lidt om de norske Forholde i den trivelige By," *Skandinaven*, November 5, 1913.

<sup>83</sup> "History of Sons of Norway in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada."

<sup>84</sup> "Vort sprog: Bemerkninger over det norske sprog. Holdt ved Sønner av Norges Aarsfest," *Vikingen*, No. 41, January 27, 1914, 76-79.

<sup>85</sup> "Solglyt Losje Nr. 143: Edmonton, Alberta, Kanada," in *25 års jubileum publication av 4de Distrikt av Sønner av Norge*, 1939, provided by Kenneth Domier by email correspondence on October 13, 2010.

<sup>86</sup> Sons of Norway, "Lodge Directory," accessed February 2, 2011, <http://www.sofn.com/lodgeDirectory/>. In fact, as late as 2000, Solglyt Lodge submitted a resolution to the Sons of Norway International Convention to request a referendum on the possibility of forming a Canadian district, but it was voted down. See Selma Sorenson and Leif Terning, International Convention Report, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.



the expression of Norwegian culture in America had developed its own patterns, different from those of Norway.”<sup>87</sup> A similar pattern can be traced in various Canadian immigrant groups as well, according to Royden Loewen. He says that “[t]hese social and cultural realities may have appeared to be transplanted from an old-world base, but oftentimes they were new-world creations born within conflict, shaped by ordinary members and local understandings.”<sup>88</sup>

Canadian delegates had provided sound arguments as to why Canada should become a separate district, among them being that more independence would strengthen the lodges’ activities and that Canada and the United States were significantly different in terms of national and socio-economic life.<sup>89</sup> Thus, we see that Canadians of Norwegian descent clearly did not feel American, although they had joined an American organization. From this, one may even argue that cultural patterns had developed differently in Canada due to these different circumstances. Norberg says that it was difficult to organize lodges in Canada, partly because the settlements were more spread out than in the United States, but he also believes the reason could lie in the general Norwegian psyche. The founders of Sons of Norway had also experienced some scepticism in the United States from Norwegian immigrants. Norberg claims that although “they had linked their own personal destinies with their new adopted country, they did not feel too enthusiastic about joining an American organization, even though Sons of Norway was a living expression of their common Norwegian heritage.”<sup>90</sup> According to him, this was true of Norwegian Americans and Norwegian Canadians alike. While some Norwegian Americans may have felt this way due to “the very psychology so characteristic of the Norwegian people,” Norberg does not take into account that Canadians of Norwegian descent could have been hesitant because the organization was American, not Canadian.<sup>91</sup> The Canadians’ struggle to gain independence for their lodges certainly implies this. The Norwegian Canadians who originally asked for lodges clearly thought there was something important to gain from Sons of Norway, yet they disagreed on the organization. Consequently, the establishment of lodges in Canada suggests that Canadians of Norwegian descent saw a need for an organization in which to uphold their Norwegian heritage, yet they did not believe that it could be organized from the United States since Canadians and

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<sup>87</sup> Norborg, *An American Saga*, 83.

<sup>88</sup> Loewen and Friesen, *Immigrants in Prairie Cities*, 33.

<sup>89</sup> Norborg, *An American Saga*, 189.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

Americans were different in certain respects. From this we can notice a Canadian-Norwegian identity manifesting itself.

### ***The Norwegian Ethnic Press in Canada***

In addition to in churches and the Sons of Norway, the Norwegian language and culture was supported and upheld in the Norwegian-Canadian press. Although the Norwegian ethnic press in Canada was significantly smaller than its American counterpart, some newspapers did arise in the twentieth century. According to Arlow Andersen, Norwegian-Americans decided to establish newspapers because they were impressed by the magnitude of the American press, and since they had been “imbibed of the democratic spirit in the home country, they cherished the opportunity for expression in the new land.”<sup>92</sup> In addition, the newspapers helped maintain both a cultural and a political bond for the immigrants.<sup>93</sup> Although Andersen’s first claim is a bit pretentious, it is clear that newspapers became valued by Norwegian communities in the United States. In 1920, Theodore C. Blegen noted “that the Norwegian element in the United States has not been without a newspaper of its own, regularly issued, since 1847” and “[m]ost of the time since that date it has in fact possessed not one, but many.”<sup>94</sup> In fact, the Norwegian press was the second ethnic press to appear in the United States, only preceded by the German press.<sup>95</sup> The Norwegian communities in Canada, on the other hand, did not experience an abundance of newspapers. The first regularly issued Norwegian language-newspaper, *Norrøna*, Winnipeg, was first published on March 12, 1910. We learn from the first issue that other, unsuccessful, attempts of establishing a Norwegian newspaper had been made. To a great extent, according to *Norrøna*’s editors, this was due to great suspicion among the Norwegian settlers in Canada about what the money would be spent on.<sup>96</sup> On February 7, 1930, a Norwegian newspaper was established in Vancouver, called *Vancouver Posten*, and the two aforementioned newspapers were the only ones that managed to survive for any length of time.

In addition to the two newspapers mentioned above, the Norwegian Lutheran Church started publishing *Hyrden (Shepherd)* in October 1924, but this functioned more as a church

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<sup>92</sup> Arlow W. Anderson, “The Norwegian-American Press,” in *The Ethnic Press in the United States: A Historical Analysis and Handbook*, ed. Sally M. Miller (New York; Westport; Connecticut; London: Greenwood Press, 1987), 261.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>94</sup> Theodore C. Blegen, “The Early Norwegian Press in America,” *Minnesota History Bulletin* vol. III, no 8, (1920): 507.

<sup>95</sup> Jerzy Zubrzycki, “The Role of the Foreign-Language Press in Migrant Integration,” *Population Studies*, Vol. 12, no. 1 (1958): 74, accessed January 28, 2011

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2172213.pdf?acceptTC=true>.

<sup>96</sup> “Nogen ord til Den norske nation i Canada,” *Norrøna*, March 12, 1910, 1.

newsletter than as a newspaper.<sup>97</sup> A few others, such as *Dominion Skandinav*, Winnipeg, and *Canada Nordmanden*, Prince Albert, existed for a few years, but did not last long. It is likely that larger publications like *Norrøna* and *Vancouver Posten* became too popular and difficult to compete with. This is certainly what is suggested by readers of *Vancouver Posten*. We learn that the *Dominion Skandinav* “for some reason has thrown in the towel”<sup>98</sup> and that “as of late, *Norrøna* and her most eager disciples have been most occupied with telling the readers to be pleased with what they have, and unite around the paper that has turned out to be viable – i.e. *Norrøna*.”<sup>99</sup> Since the Norwegian communities in Canada were smaller and more scattered than the American ones, it likely amounted to problems for the establishment of viable newspapers. However, it is noteworthy that various attempts were made, since it underlines that, at least some, Norwegian settlers thought newspapers were needed. Another example of this is the hand-written newspaper *Vikingen*, which, despite having found no printed copy, demonstrates a particular interest and need for a Norwegian-language newspaper in Alberta’s capital.<sup>100</sup>

According to Loken, Norwegians in Canada were familiar with the Norwegian-American press and both subscribed and wrote to various Norwegian-American newspapers.<sup>101</sup> This could be one of the reasons why Norwegian settlers wanted to establish newspapers in Canada. Both *Norrøna* and *Vancouver Posten* refer to Norwegian-American newspapers, such as *Decorah Posten*, in their issues, and the former actually includes a section on *USA nyt* – news from the USA – in every newspaper, whereas *Canada Nyt* – news from Canada – appears more irregularly. This is quite striking, especially since the editors of *Norrøna* explained this by pointing to a lack of space.<sup>102</sup> *Vancouver Posten*, on the other hand, is not divided into such sections, and articles from the United States are less frequent than Canadian ones. It is, however, evident that both newspapers were shaped by the American press, which is quite understandable. The editors wanted their newspapers to be successful, and most likely looked to newspapers that were popular and tried to copy some of

<sup>97</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 171.

<sup>98</sup> “av en eller annen grunn har meldt pas” The writer’s translation. The Norwegian used in *Norrøna*, *Vancouver Posten*, and *Vikingen* is conservative and archaic, but the quotations have been cited verbatim to preserve and convey the newspapers’ stylistic tone. To better communicate the meaning of the quotations they have been translated into Standard English.

<sup>99</sup> “*Norrøna* og dens ivrigste disipler er i den senere tid blitt travelt beskjeftiget med å fortelle sine lesere at man får nøies med hvad man har og samle sig om det som har vist sig å være levedyktig, - d.v.s. *Norrøna*.” “Fra leserne: Litt av hvert fra Winnipeg,” *Vancouver Posten*, May 29, 1931, 4; and “En får nøies med hvad man har’!” *Vancouver Posten*, September 25, 1931, 4.

<sup>100</sup> Although the origins and circulation of *Vikingen* is uncertain, it will be referred to as a newspaper in this thesis. Rudling, “Paper for Scandinavians in Edmonton: 68.

<sup>101</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 167-170.

<sup>102</sup> “Canada nyt,” *Norrøna*, April 2, 1910, 1.

their features. As mentioned above, Norwegians in North America were in some instances closely linked and felt connected through a shared heritage and fate. In spite of this, newspapers from the United States would not devote much space to news from Canadian settlements. Jerze Zubrzycki argues that the typical foreign-language newspapers have five functions: to convey “news of the country of settlement, home-country news, group life and interests, [and] editorial features.”<sup>103</sup> These issues would not have been sufficiently addressed for Canadian readers of Norwegian-American newspapers. The editors of *Norrøna* clearly thought it was about time to make a Norwegian language newspaper for “the Norwegian nation in Canada.”<sup>104</sup>

’Norrøna’ er ikke den første avis De har faat; heller ikke den eneste. Og dog: Der er noget eget ved dette blad, som gjør at der ligger en betydning i dets utgivelse som faa aner.<sup>105</sup>

’Norrøna’ is not the first newspaper you have received; nor the only one. But still: there is something special about this paper, which makes the publishing of it more significant than most people are aware of.

The publishing was significant, they claimed, because of all the work and money that had been geared towards a distinctly Norwegian newspaper in Canada.<sup>106</sup> Norwegian Canadians had read newspapers for years, and the newly established newspaper contained features they were used to. Yet, there was something different about it. Although Norwegian-American and Norwegian-Canadian newspapers may be quite similar in their outlook and composition, they are still strikingly different for the reason that they were written by and for Norwegians living in two different countries. The Norwegian-Canadian newspapers would become arenas in which the five functions mentioned above were realized, and prepare the Norwegian settlers for a new life in addition to helping them become good citizens in their new home country, which is the principal function of the foreign-language press, according to Zubrzycki.<sup>107</sup>

### ***Analysis of Three Norwegian-Canadian Newspapers***

Andersen notes how a relatively high number of Norwegian Americans could afford to buy, and subsequently did buy, newspapers compared to Norwegians living in Norway. Thus, newspapers in the United States, unlike in Norway, were not just for the wealthy or the

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<sup>103</sup> Zubrzycki, “Role of Foreign-Language Press:” 76.

<sup>104</sup> “den norske nation i Canada.”

<sup>105</sup> “Nogen ord til Den norske nation i Canada,” *Norrøna*, March 12, 1910, 1.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>107</sup> Zubrzycki, “Role of Foreign-Language Press:” 77.

intellectual elite, but for the masses.<sup>108</sup> The term “the Norwegian nation in Canada” used by *Norrøna* may have been correct in that Norwegian Canadians from all parts of Norway and with differing socio-economic status would read the newspaper. However, the term does suggest a form of patriotism, and this becomes evident by looking at various issues of both *Norrøna* and *Vancouver Posten*. Although both papers concern themselves with Norwegian and international news, a great number of the articles have a distinctly Norwegian perspective. Articles about famous Norwegian explorers and their expeditions and plans for the future are frequent, as well as articles about foreign explorers who have not been as successful as their Norwegian counterparts.<sup>109</sup> In addition, the newspapers often relate stories about the celebration of Norwegian holidays in Norway or across North America.

Yet, one must not forget that the editors point out that they are the Norwegian nation “in Canada.” Thus, a dual identity can be traced right from the start of the Norwegian-Canadian press. *Vancouver Posten* pays close attention to Canadian politics, in particular provincial and federal elections. Through analyses of candidates, political advertisements, election results, and discussions of topics such as recession and unemployment rates, the newspaper encourages the Norwegian community to take an active part in their new home country. One function of ethnic presses was oftentimes to teach the community about the host society, and we see this in the Norwegian-Canadian newspapers as well.<sup>110</sup> There is no doubt about their pride in being of Norwegian stock, but there seems to be a distinct conviction in the newspapers that their heritage has given Norwegians in Canada certain responsibilities. Without active involvement in their neighbourhood they are unable to contribute towards the greatness of Canada. In fact, not only must they be politically active, it is their duty to learn English and Canadian history if they intend to stay:

First and last our duty to this country, if we are here to stay is the utmost acquisition of its language and history, our share in fostering community spirit and good will [sic.] with our neighbors – be they not of our race or creed. But in doing this thing we have no greater help than the heritage that is ours. The heritage of a hard working, clean living, God fearing people, who have been 100 per cent literate for generations.<sup>111</sup>

The writer does attribute Norwegians with great, and no doubt exaggerated, qualifications. Swyripa argues that ethno-religious groups Canadianized such ideals and that the traits

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<sup>108</sup> Anderson, “Norwegian-American Press,” 162.

<sup>109</sup> See for example “Atter et tap,” *Vancouver Posten*, February 7, 1930, 4.

<sup>110</sup> Leara D. Rhodes, *The Ethnic Press: Shaping the American Dream* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010), 11.

<sup>111</sup> “Our Heritage: For the Young Folks,” *Vancouver Posten*, April 11, 1930, 8

became part of their “[...] national character born of adversity, sustained over centuries, and admirably suited to the demands of pioneering in western Canada.”<sup>112</sup> In this regard, Norwegian immigrants were similar to other ethnic groups that settled in western Canada. However, the writer of the article cited above also acknowledges that Canada is a country of many nationalities, and that this shapes the nation. Thus, to legitimize their place in Canadian society as pioneers of the west, it was vital to highlight Norwegian traits that made them especially important. Because of their background, she claims, Norwegians must also become shapers of the nation:

To this great human smelting [sic.] pot, dozens of nations brought their customs and traditions. Gradually they are mixing and boiling together with a great Canadian nation in sight. In this we of the old world must submerge our nationality; but our creed, our customs and literature: The Norse folk lore [sic.] and song, our great men and women. They must stand up and be second to none in the hearts and minds of our children, or they will be a drifting lot without pride of race or creed. [...] The presedent [sic.] of today is history a hundred years hence, and we are establishing it, by what we teach our children.<sup>113</sup>

There seems to be a recurrence of a couple of topics in *Vancouver Posten*. Canada has a number of things to offer the Norwegian immigrants, such as farm land, jobs with the fisheries, and mining and forest industries, and a future they can cut out for themselves. Yet, Norwegians in Canada can offer their morale and good upbringing to their adopted country, and this is important for two reasons. First, it will greatly contribute to Canada as a nation, and the government itself sought after immigrants with good qualifications. Second, their children will not be Norwegians, but Canadians. It is the parents’ duty to make sure that their children grow up in a free, prosperous and great nation. This is also stressed in an article which celebrates the presentation of a bill to Parliament that sought to establish a new nationality; Canadians. Formerly, citizens of Canada had been British subjects, and the author of the article points out that people born in Canada do not have a nationality, since being a British subject is not given any status abroad. This would now change.<sup>114</sup> If Norwegian immigrants chose not to become naturalized, they would keep their Norwegian nationality, but their children had no such choice. Thus, the presentation, and likely passing, of the bill was great news. The Norwegian ethnic press highlights an important fact; the Norwegian immigrants were not sojourners.<sup>115</sup> They intended to stay, their children would become Canadian, not Norwegian, and they had a duty to help Canada achieve greatness. Yet, it was

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<sup>112</sup> Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes*, 120-121.

<sup>113</sup> “Our Heritage: For the Young Folks,” 8.

<sup>114</sup> “Canadisk borger!” *Vancouver Posten*, March 27, 1931, 4.

<sup>115</sup> Although this is not entirely true, at least not for all of the Norwegian immigrants, the newspapers are certainly not written for an audience of sojourners.

feared that the children would become Canadianized to a great extent, thus they had to be taught Norwegian values and ideals. Through their articles, the ethnic press helped educate and integrate Norwegian immigrants. Leara D. Rhodes argues that the early function of the ethnic press in America was to acculturate and assimilate the immigrants, however, it seems that the Norwegian-Canadian press believed in a blending of cultures – acculturation, not complete assimilation.<sup>116</sup>

Topics like Norwegianness in opposition to assimilation and cultural adaptation can frequently be found in *Vikingen* as well. For instance, one writer points out that youth societies are important ways of promoting Nordic culture in Alberta, thus he does not promote acculturation.<sup>117</sup> Neither does he want the Norwegian community to be isolated, but he wants them to share their culture with others in Alberta through organizations. The purpose of the newspaper was to publish news from the Scandinavian community in Edmonton and surrounding areas, but it has a clear Norwegian focus.<sup>118</sup> It is also evident from the first issue that the newspaper had no intention of being overly serious. In fact, readers are warned that if they are hurt by anything that is published in the newspaper, they should buy “a box of reflection ointment” to be cured; in other words, readers must be able to take a joke.<sup>119</sup> In this way, the newspaper is strikingly different from *Norrøna* and *Vancouver Posten*. Also, *Vikingen* contains more stories than the other two, and one can also find smaller sections, such as “Did you know...” columns about the people in the community. This was probably easier to integrate in *Vikingen* than in the larger publications since the Norwegian community in Edmonton was relatively small.<sup>120</sup> Despite these differences, the way of writing and conveying news is very much the same in all three publications.

In general, two recurring themes can be found in the three newspapers. One is a description of Norwegians as Vikings, whereas the other is a description of Norwegians as freedom-loving and democratic. Frances Swyripa says that Norwegians did not invent all-embracing myths of how they came to and established themselves in Canada. The Norwegian immigrants did not have a privileged claim to the land, like, for instance, settlers in New Iceland had, they had quite loose bonds except for their shared nationality, and they did not have strong immigration leaders, all of which contributed to the lack of mythmaking.<sup>121</sup> Orm Øverland argues that European immigrant groups in the United States wanted to prove that

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<sup>116</sup> Rhodes, *Ethnic Press Shaping American Dream*, 6.

<sup>117</sup> ”Lidt mere om ungdomsforeningen,” *Vikingen*, No. 10, July 3, 1912, 106-107.

<sup>118</sup> “Oplysning om Bladets formal,” *Vikingen*, No. 1, December 13, 1911, 1.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>120</sup> Rudling, “Paper for Scandinavians in Edmonton,” 69.

<sup>121</sup> Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes*, 80.

they had a special claim to the country, and a group of myths, which he calls homemaking myths, arose. One such category of myths is “grunnleggings myter [sic.],” that is, founding myths; the immigrants claim that they came to the country before or at least at the same time as the majority did.<sup>122</sup> Although the Norwegian-Canadian community at large did not create all-embracing myths, the ethnic press did convey certain homemaking myths. We can read in *Vancouver Posten* that although there are no Leiv Eiriksson societies in Canada they should still celebrate Leiv Eiriksson Day on October 9. This is important because “also we [the Norwegians] up in Canada must get down to a more purposeful self-assertion policy.”<sup>123</sup> This comment suggests that Norwegians have particular claims to the land, albeit without being very explicit about it. Nevertheless, the newspaper that most clearly sets out to create such a myth is *Vikingen*. Numerous articles refer to the Norwegian settlers as Vikings, and a couple of stories relate that Norwegian settlers to Canada were embarking on a second Viking voyage. The myth of the Vikings as founders of Canada has been much more deliberately and elaborately employed by the Icelanders than the Norwegians, since Leiv Eiriksson came from Iceland. In fact, Icelandic Canadians have used the image of the Vikings to connect themselves to the homeland and embed themselves in Canadian history: the Vikings founded Iceland as well as Canada, thus Icelanders play an important role in Canadian history.<sup>124</sup> Yet, since Norwegian Vikings discovered and settled in Iceland, and Leiv Eiriksson’s father was Eirik Raude, a Norwegian Viking king, a great number of Norwegians claim that Leiv Eiriksson was Norwegian. This is demonstrated by the wish to celebrate Leiv Eiriksson Day expressed by *Vancouver Posten*.<sup>125</sup> The image of the Vikings is used to ascribe Norwegian settlers with certain characteristics, such as bravery, sturdiness and adventurousness. *Vikingen* takes the myth further by referring to the new wave of immigrants as “The Second Vinland Voyage”– “Den anden Vinlandsfærd.”<sup>126</sup> Thus, the newspaper links the voyage of Leiv Eiriksson with the Norwegian immigration to the Canadian west. The settlers are Vikings exploring and claiming unchartered land, which directly connects Norwegian Canadians to the larger Canadian history.

In the stories that link Viking voyages to Norwegian immigration, traditional Viking characteristics and the supremacy of the “Nordic race” are central. The main contributors to *Vikingen* are introduced as important figures and given Viking names, such as Sørensen

<sup>122</sup> Øverland, ”Hjemlandsmyter:” 146-148.

<sup>123</sup> “vi også heroppe i Canada må ta fatt på en mere målbevisst selhevdelsespolitikk.” “Leif Eriksons minnedag,” *Vancouver Posten*, September 25, 1931, 4.

<sup>124</sup> Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes*, 166.

<sup>125</sup> “Leif Eriksons minnedag,” 4.

<sup>126</sup> “En virkelighetsdrøm om Vikingeslægten,” *Vikingen*, No. 3, February, 7, 1912, 25-31.



*Jorsalafar*.<sup>127</sup> They sail through wind and storm from Norway to Canada. When they arrive they meet what the author calls “men brown like copper,” and it becomes apparent that they have to fight them. The result is that the Vikings win, and as a reward they are offered half of the kingdom. Sørensen is also offered the chief’s daughter in marriage.<sup>128</sup> Clearly these men are brave, strong, and clever, but the story has obvious racist undertones. The men they meet on the shore are most likely aboriginals, and they are portrayed as wild savages. It is highly unlikely that these Edmontonians met a large band of rather unfriendly Native Canadians when they set foot in Canada for the first time. Yet, we must keep in mind that Norwegians were considered preferred immigrants, and this could obviously have affected their way of thinking. This is certainly suggested by one of the arguments put forth in favour of equality between the sexes in *Vikingen*: women should be given homesteads by the Canadian government since men of all races, including criminals and semi-barbarians, are given them freely.<sup>129</sup>

Such racist comments are not frequent, but present in *Norrøna* and *Vancouver Posten* as well. One article in the latter claims that if it were not for the technically advanced weapons of “the white man,” aboriginals would still have tried to kill both the settlers and each other.<sup>130</sup> In J. S. Woodsworth’s *Strangers Within Our Gates*, Scandinavians are described as the people most likely to succeed in the west since they are “[a]ccustomed to the rigors of a northern climate, clean-blooded, thrifty, ambitious and hard-working” – in fact, the Canadian west is a “pioneer country, where the strong, not the weak, are wanted.”<sup>131</sup> Such ideas could easily make Norwegian Canadians claim a different and better status for themselves in Canada, and Per Anders Rudling argues that they did feel superior to everyone, even to Anglo-Saxons.<sup>132</sup> This may be true, but we see this need to raise one’s status above others in most immigrant groups. Orm Øverland argues that in order to be accepted by the elites you need to distinguish yourself from the rest:

[i]f your claim to a status at least equal to that of the most prestigious group is to have any meaning, it must include the corollary claim that you are different from those who by

<sup>127</sup> G. Sørensen was the president of the Sons of Norway *Nordpolen* lodge, today; *Solglyt* lodge.

<sup>128</sup> “En virkelighetsdrøm om Vikingslægten,” *Vikingen*, No.3, February 7, 1912, 25-31.

<sup>129</sup> “Skulde kvinden have lige retigheder som manden?,” *Vikingen*, No. 35, 2-3, September 23, 1913.

<sup>130</sup> “Ikke skammen, men skrytet man vil tillivs,” *Vancouver Posten*, January 22, 1932, 5.

<sup>131</sup> James Shaver Woodsworth, *Strangers Within Our Gates: Or, Coming Canadians* (Toronto: F. C. Stephenson, 1909), 92, retrieved on January 31, 2011, <http://ebooks.library.ualberta.ca/local/strangerswithino00wooduoft>.

<sup>132</sup> Rudling, “Paper for Scandinavians in Edmonton,” 75.

association may lower your status. The definition of your proximity to the elite must include a definition of your distance from those who are looked down upon by the elite.<sup>133</sup>

Norwegians differed from a number of other immigrant groups in that they were given an increased status even before they left their home country. Yet, they did assert themselves above others, which fits well with Øverland's argument. Their claim to superiority over aboriginals, Eastern Europeans, and other immigrant groups defined them as on a par with the British-Canadian elite.

While a focus on strength, bravery and superiority is at the centre of the stories, there are other aspects that should be discussed. If we look beyond the Vikings' superior traits and the heroism that is glorified, we see that the stories can be read as allegories of immigration. The author explains that the final destination is "the great western land" and nothing is going to stop them from reaching their destination and succeeding there.<sup>134</sup> However, the stories also relate that trial and hardships affect the men aboard the ships as well as when they reach their destination. For instance, some of the Vikings have to part with their loved ones when they leave, and the writer says "it is more difficult for one who is rich on love to join the Viking voyage, than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle,"<sup>135</sup> making connections to the biblical story about Jesus and the rich young man.<sup>136</sup> Leaving family, friends, and in some instances wives, girlfriends and children behind was quite normal for immigrants, and it is likely that this was difficult for many.<sup>137</sup> It made it especially clear that they were on their own and without familiar connections in the new land. This loneliness described in the Viking stories can be found in articles in *Vancouver Posten* as well, where Pastor E. L. Nanthrup greets the readers and writes about the difficulty of being so far away from home at Christmastime.<sup>138</sup> In addition to this, a story in *Vikingen* indicates that there were arguments within the Norwegian community by depicting a war between two Viking factions. Although they emigrated from the same country they were not similar in every respect and the story indicates that they had quite vocal arguments at times.<sup>139</sup> Thus, although *Vikingen* created a myth on how the Norwegian immigrants came to Canada, we find traces of sadness, dispute and alienation within the tales as well.

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<sup>133</sup> Orm Øverland, "Home-Making Myths: Immigrants' Claims to a Special Status in Their New Land," in "Working Paper," *Odense American Studies International Series*, no. 20 (1996): 3.

<sup>134</sup> "En virkelighetsdrøm om Vikingslægten," *Vikingen*, No. 3, February 7, 1912, 25-31.

<sup>135</sup> "Det er vanskeligere for en som er rig på kjærlighed at være med på Vikingefarten, end det er for en Kamel at krybe igennem et nåløye."

<sup>136</sup> Matthew 19, 24.

<sup>137</sup> Burnet and Palmer, "Coming Canadians," 83.

<sup>138</sup> "Julehilsen," *Vancouver Posten*, December 26, 1930, 1.

<sup>139</sup> "Thinget på Snoflakholmen," *Vikingen*, No. 28, June 17, 1913, 246-249.

In addition to being strong and brave Vikings, the three newspapers paint a picture of Norwegians as being democratic and freedom-loving. These were traits they believed could improve Canadian society. We find several debates about female suffrage in *Vikingen*, and in the first editions the newspaper takes an active stance against it. Some readers, however, clearly disagree.<sup>140</sup> The debate about female suffrage is interesting because the opponents praise Canada for doing the right thing and argue that Norway should never have given women the vote.<sup>141</sup> They do not accept the argument that Canadian women should be given the right to vote since women possess that right in Norway.<sup>142</sup> This shows that the opponents identified with Canada and saw it as their country. However, later editions of *Vikingen* show that it changed its stance around the time women were given the right to vote in parliamentary elections in Norway, and became a staunch supporter of women's suffrage.<sup>143</sup> The fact that women still could not vote in Canada influenced some of the articles, and it is evident that the writers thought Canada had something to learn from Norway. When women did not show up to a meeting in the literary society because of a suffragette meeting, *Vikingen* sarcastically reminded them that despite the fact that they were barred from voting in political elections, they were very welcome to vote in the literary society.<sup>144</sup> The newspaper thereby implies that Norwegian Canadians were more democratic than other Canadians.

Interestingly, a reader of *Vancouver Posten* starts a debate by saying that Norwegians in Canada should not associate themselves with the Vikings since they want to be seen as proponents of freedom. According to him, a freedom-loving Viking is an oxymoron. They were nothing more than pirates and barbarians, and since Norwegians want to be associated with their fight for freedom they should not boast of their Viking past. He explains this by saying that if an aboriginal had stood up in a congregation and proudly talked about how his grandfather used to wage war, loot, kill and kidnap women and children, Norwegians would have been outraged and labelled him a barbarian like his grandfather.<sup>145</sup> Instead,

hvis vi eftertrakter å bli respektert av andre nasjoner, da skulle vi opføre oss slik i all vår handel og vandel, at de andre folkeslag kunne kjenne oss som ærlige og sannferdige folk, det ville bringe vår nasjon mere hæder, enn alle vikingehistorier til sammen kunne gjøre.<sup>146</sup>

<sup>140</sup> See for example "Et svar til Kvinnehaderen," *Vikingen*, No. 5, March, 1912, 44-45.

<sup>141</sup> Women were given the right to vote in municipal elections in 1910, parliamentary elections in 1913.

<sup>142</sup> "Tituleret Kvindehaderen," *Vikingen*, No. 6, April 17, 1912, 53-57.

<sup>143</sup> See for example "Kvindens rettigheder i samfundet," *Vikingen*, no. 33, August 24, 1913, 286-290.

<sup>144</sup> "Valget," *Vikingen*, No. 41, January 27, 1914, 61-63.

<sup>145</sup> "Litt vikingprat," *Vancouver Posten*, January 8, 1932, 5.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

if we seek to be respected by other nations, we should behave well in all our actions, so that other people could think of us as honest and truthful people. That would bring our nation more glory than all the Viking stories put together.

In defence of the Vikings, a reader argues that they were no worse than other people had been at that time. They did not fight innocent people, but they ruled because of their courage and boldness.<sup>147</sup> Another reader claims that although the Vikings could be violent, they did not just conquer lands, but they recreated these countries into countries of great art, science, knowledge, and material wellbeing.<sup>148</sup> Norwegians, then, had always been resourceful and able to improve the countries in which they had settled. This idea seems to have contributed to self-assertion among the readers of the newspapers, and is an example of another category of Øverland's homemaking myths; myths about ideological gifts or an ideological fellowship. These myths claim that the immigrant group shares certain qualities with the elite, or they can offer specific virtues that are ingrained in their culture.<sup>149</sup>

The clearest symbol of Norwegians as freedom-loving and democratic is the 17<sup>th</sup> of May celebration – *Syttende mai*. All three newspapers display a distinct pride about the celebrations, and some readers express that they never fully understood the importance of *Syttende mai* until they emigrated.<sup>150</sup> In honour of the day, *Norrøna* writes that “let us never forget what she [mother Norway] gave us; she prepared us for the great demands.”<sup>151</sup> This suggests that there were certain demands Norwegians should meet in Canada. Again we find that *Vikingen* is much more outspoken than the other two newspapers. The writers saw the 17<sup>th</sup> of May celebrations as a distinct mission for the Norwegians in Canada:

Festligheterne er nu over men minderne fra vor hundrigaarige frihedsdag vil ikke saa let slettes ut eller glemmes bort. Det synes at blive mer karakteristisk for os nordmænd at skryte mindre over os selv og vore fædre end før, et andet glædelig tidens tegn er. Jeg tror vi er blit mer strævsomme mer arbeidende mot det store maal at være baade frihetens og kulturens fanebærere. Dette maa være opgaverne for enhver nordmand og til dette skulde enhver 17. festlighet lede os.<sup>152</sup>

The celebrations are now over, but the memories of our hundred-year old Day of Freedom cannot be easily obliterated or forgotten. It seems to have become more characteristic for us Norwegians to boast less of ourselves and our forefathers than earlier, which is another pleasant sign of the times. I think we have become more industrious, more hard-working to achieve the great goal which is to be champions of

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<sup>147</sup> ”Vikinge forsvares,” *Vancouver Posten*, January 15, 1932, 5.

<sup>148</sup> ”Oppmuntrende ord,” *Vancouver Posten*, January 23, 1931, 5.

<sup>149</sup> Øverland, ”Hjemlandsmyter,” 148.

<sup>150</sup> ”Nasjonaldagen,” *Vancouver Posten*, May 15, 1931, 4.

<sup>151</sup> ”La os aldrig glemme hvad hun os gav; hun fostret os jo for de store krav...” ”17de Mai,” *Norrøna*, May 13, 1910, 4.

<sup>152</sup> ”Efter 17. mai,” *Vikingen*, May, 1914, 86-87.

both freedom and culture. This must be the task of every Norwegian, and this is what every 17<sup>th</sup> of May celebration should lead us towards.

This mission fits well with Øverland's category of ideological homemaking myths. *Vikingen* conveys that Norwegians should share their ideals with Canadian society. For all three newspapers it seems like the most successful way of doing this was by holding on to Norwegian ideals and the Norwegian language within the Norwegian communities. *Vikingen* especially stresses this, since great values were to be found in the Norwegian language and literature. One writer undoubtedly feared the loss of the language and wanted to fight to keep it alive among Norwegians in Canada. According to him their language is their "spiritual barometer"<sup>153</sup> and its "rise or fall decides which position we take among cultured people."<sup>154</sup> The three papers discuss the importance of keeping the Norwegian language alive, thus it is a bit paradoxical that to a great extent the opposite happened.

### ***The Diminishing of the Norwegian Language***

Officially, the Norwegian language had been in use in churches, newspapers and fraternity organizations, however, throughout the twentieth century this gradually changed. It became especially apparent in the churches. The churches realized that they did not reach out to the community at large, because of the language barrier. This became an issue for, among other churches, the Messiah Lutheran Church in Camrose in the 1930s. The older members wanted the services to be conducted in their mother tongue, whereas the younger members, usually born in Canada, wanted English to be the language of instruction. The first solution was to conduct services in the two languages in different parts of the church. This took place in the late 1930s and 1940s. Yet, gradually, the language of instruction changed to English and today there are no traces of the Norwegian language left in the church.<sup>155</sup> This pattern seems to correspond to Loken's description of the language debate in Norwegian churches in Canada. Not only would the church be incapable of reaching out and welcoming new members from the local community when Norwegian was being used, but the Norwegian services alienated their own, younger members. It was noted that English-speaking children of Norwegian immigrants left the church because they could not understand the services.<sup>156</sup> Yet, this was somewhat countered for through the Confirmation, which many parents wanted to

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<sup>153</sup> "aandelige barometer"

<sup>154</sup> "Dens stigning eller fald bestemmer kva sats vi indtar blandt kulturfolkene." "Vort sprog: Bemerkninger over det norske sprog. Holdt ved Sønner av Norges Aarsfest," *Vikingen*, No. 41, January 27, 1914, 76-79.

<sup>155</sup> "Messiah Lutheran Church Camrose, Alberta: Historical Background 1901-2005. Messiah's Mission – 'Sharing Jesus Christ with all people'" (Camrose: Messiah Lutheran Church, 2005), 4

<sup>156</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 142.

have conducted in Norwegian since they thought that “the catechism and the explanation had more richness and meaning in Norwegian than in English.”<sup>157</sup> While this may be an important explanation, it should also be noted that the Confirmation was a Norwegian tradition brought over to Canada, and, in fact, it is not unusual to see the date of someone’s confirmation pointed out, just like their date of birth, in memoirs or church histories.<sup>158</sup> Thus, they may also have thought that the tradition lost some of its importance if it was conducted in English. Yet, whereas there had been a strong motion in favour of retaining the word “norsk” (Norwegian) in the official name of the Norwegian Lutheran Church during its first church convention in 1919, the services were increasingly conducted in English in the 1930s and 1940s. This did of course spark some controversy, but the opponents lost the language battle.<sup>159</sup>

The loss of the Norwegian language in churches must also be seen in conjunction with a general trend in the Canadian west during the Great Depression, which hit all denominations hard. It was difficult to pay, and thus supply, ministers, people moved away from drought areas and in some instances this led to areas losing their ethnic characteristics.<sup>160</sup> This resulted in declining church memberships in all denominations. The membership of the Norwegian Lutheran Church dropped from 14,108 in 1929 to 10,930 in 1939.<sup>161</sup> Some immigrants became more attracted to so-called “Canadian” churches. Among Ukrainian Canadians, for instance, membership in the Ukrainian Catholic Church dropped from 58 per cent of the population in 1931 to 50 per cent in 1941, whereas Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist and other churches increased in Ukrainian membership. Undoubtedly, the United Church of Canada had an extra appeal of being “Canadian.”<sup>162</sup> Although members found comfort in having religious services conducted in their native language, some churches were in desperate need of revenues and could only survive by attracting new members. The move away from the ancestral language was therefore not a strictly Norwegian phenomenon, but became necessary for competitive reasons in many denominations.<sup>163</sup> However, the transition seems to have happened relatively quickly in the Norwegian churches, with only 30 per cent of the services conducted in the ancestral language by 1940.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>158</sup> See for example Sorenson, *My Memoirs*, 15 and “Camrose Lutheran Through Fifty Years,” 7.

<sup>159</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 142 and 195

<sup>160</sup> Burnet and Palmer, “*Coming Canadians*,” 135.

<sup>161</sup> These figures exclude the coastal areas of British Columbia and smaller Lutheran synods such as the Lutheran Brethren. See Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 105.

<sup>162</sup> Burnet and Palmer, “*Coming Canadians*,” 135.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.* 135-136.

<sup>164</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 195

It has been argued that Norwegian settlers rapidly assimilated to Canadian ways, especially because they lost their language so quickly. The story of the Norwegian language in the Lutheran churches certainly seems to support this argument. Loken claims that the Multiculturalism Policy came too late to save most Norwegians and their ethnic identity. They quickly lost their language and were assimilated in every way. He explains that this was a result of the “dominance by elite groups.”<sup>165</sup> Thus, the language argument according to him seems to be two folded: 1) The Norwegian language was gradually voluntarily dropped in churches in order to reach out to their communities, and 2) Norwegians were forced by the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture to lose their language. There are important reasons to question Loken’s statement. Blaming the late coming Multiculturalism Policy takes all the blame off the Norwegian immigrants, especially when other groups managed to retain their language. This has also been argued by Frances Swyripa.<sup>166</sup> In addition, Loken seems to think that the adoption of the English language was the main catalyst for Norwegian assimilation. One may of course ask whether or not Loken’s grim description of the language situation is completely true, but more importantly one must question whether the Norwegian language in itself was the most important identity marker for the early settlers. We learn from Merriken that her mother always addressed her children in Norwegian, “lest [they] forget [their] mother tongue.” Yet, the children still had to “speak English as much as [they] knew how.”<sup>167</sup> Evidently, the mother tongue served an important function as identity marker, and the children received strict orders about speaking only in Norwegian when visiting their Norwegian neighbours.<sup>168</sup> However, throughout Merriken’s memoirs it becomes clear that her parents also saw great importance in, and valued, the acquisition of the English language. When the children learnt to speak Swedish with a skoning accent from a Swedish homesteader, Merriken describes how they had to keep this secret from their parents because “the folks were so intent on us learning perfect English and that accent is difficult to overcome once you acquire it.”<sup>169</sup> It seems like the children were brought up to be bilingual, but that heavier emphasis was put on learning English perfectly.

Another example of language trouble can be found in Sigurd Sorenson’s memoirs. He relates that he struggled in school at first because his parents had mainly spoken Norwegian to him during his pre-school years. When they returned to Norway in 1920, he had forgotten

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<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 186-188.

<sup>166</sup> Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes*, 137

<sup>167</sup> Merriken, *Looking for Country*, 73.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

most of his Norwegian and again he found himself in a situation in which he struggled with his schoolwork.<sup>170</sup> Thus, once he started speaking English and all his schoolwork was carried out in this language, he was no longer addressed in Norwegian at home. Once he returned to Norway, he gradually started learning Norwegian again and stopped speaking English. It could seem like his parents stressed the importance of the language of the country in which they were presently residing. This thought is further strengthened when we learn that upon returning to Canada in 1923 “[he] had to learn English all over again.”<sup>171</sup> Thus, it does not seem like the Sorensons put heavy emphasis on bilingual instruction of their children, like Merriken’s parents did. Perhaps, then, Sorenson’s parents, as well as most other Norwegian settlers, highlighted the importance of English in order for their children to succeed in society. This suggests that their ethnic identity was passed on through other customs and traditions that were deemed less fluid and temporary than their language.

Gerald Friesen relates that some newcomers voluntarily accepted the English-Canadian customs and standards and accommodated themselves to them. Their own culture and language was not abandoned voluntarily, however, but they wanted to be seen as good Canadian citizens.<sup>172</sup> Norwegians seem to fall into this category. However, with the strong focus on retaining the Norwegian language that is found in the Norwegian-Canadian newspapers it is peculiar that it would deteriorate that quickly. *Vikingen* argues that it is important that Norwegian immigrants learn both languages, and that Norwegian and English should be credited with equal status in the Norwegian community. It is suggested that when Norwegian is forgotten, they are well on their way of forgetting their culture. The author asks: “[i]s our memory weakened, or is it not extended to us from the previous generation?”<sup>173</sup> Rudling argues that Scandinavians experienced some prejudice during World War I because it was feared they had pro-German sentiments.<sup>174</sup> Prairie leaders were not in favour of the use of so-called enemy languages, and this could perhaps have contributed further to the diminution of Norwegian.<sup>175</sup> It is important to note, though, that although the language was dropped in church and societies, federal census data suggests that in 1941, at least 6 out of 10 Scandinavians in north-central Saskatchewan spoke their mother tongue at home.<sup>176</sup> This implies that Loken’s gloomy argument that the Norwegian language was lost by the second

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<sup>170</sup> Sorenson, *My Memoirs*, 41.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>172</sup> Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 261.

<sup>173</sup> “Er vor hukommelse svækket eller strækker den sig ikke over datoen til den forrige generation?.”

“Patriotisme,” *Vikingen*, No. 25, May 5, 1913, 221-224.

<sup>174</sup> Rudling, “Paper for Scandinavians in Edmonton,” 82-83.

<sup>175</sup> Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 347.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 273



generation is partly wrong. Also, Wendy Lee Karhoffer argues that many settlers “found that the most amenable way to come to terms with being Norwegian in Canada was through a blending of the two cultures,” by incorporating Norwegian skills, values or possessions into the Canadian way of life.<sup>177</sup> This created a sense of identity and familiarity in the new land, even though hallmarks of their culture, such as language, were gradually lost.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

Like other immigrant groups, Norwegian immigrants were preoccupied with making a new life for themselves in Canada. They joined together in Lutheran churches, ladies' aids, young people's leagues, school-building projects, ski clubs and in more formal organizations such as Sons of Norway. Such organizations were often formed by the need for mutual aid and support in order to adapt to a new country. Like Gans suggests, their identity was not always tied to visible symbols. The first generation worked to retain the language and culture and pass it on to their children, but they were equally interested in their children learning English and Canadian customs to succeed in society. The school system became a place in which the acquisition of English helped Norwegians accommodate to Canadian society, but also a unifier for Norwegians in western Canada. Through education, and by living in multicultural settlements, the Norwegian immigrants on the prairie experienced the importance of cooperation with Canadians of other ethnic backgrounds, yet the ethnic press expressed a belief that Norwegian culture had something valuable to offer Canadian society. Norwegians in Canada were also in many ways tied to Norwegian Americans. The Norwegian Lutheran Church in Canada became part of the larger American church, the Norwegian-American ethnic press circulated in Canadian settlements, they took part in each other's Norse festivals, and Norwegian Canadians joined the Norwegian-American fraternity organization Sons of Norway. Yet, through their struggle to make their churches autonomous, educate their own pastors, for example at Camrose Lutheran College, establish their own newspapers and festivals, and have their own separate Canadian Sons of Norway District we trace a distinct Norwegian-Canadian identity in formulation. Although their identity upon coming to Canada may have been more regional than national, they managed to overcome their prejudice and establish important institutions. Thus, by 1930, Norwegians in the prairie west had managed to both build communities and develop a sense of a Norwegian-Canadian identity. They were concerned with their Norwegian heritage, yet they clearly thought of Canada as their new home country. Norwegian traits such as democracy, athleticism, education, and religious piety

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<sup>177</sup> Karhoffer, "Visions of New Land," 120.

were deemed important for Canada, yet in their daily lives they were more concerned with making a living than crying over what they had left behind. In order to succeed they aided each other through these institutions in which they could speak Norwegian, conduct religious services like they were used to, and maintain traditions such as arts and crafts and Norwegian holidays. Yet, they also saw the need of working together with other ethnic groups in western Canada, especially settlements in which few Norwegians lived. In the next three decades, some identifiable aspects of this identity, like language, decreased, however, the basis of a Norwegian ethnicity in western Canada had developed, and was a reservoir that Norwegian Canadians could access once official Multiculturalism emerged in the 1960s and 1970s.

## **Chapter Three: The Road to Official Multiculturalism: Acculturation, Canadian Cultural Policy Changes and their Implications for Norwegian Canadians.**

In the years after the Great Depression and during World War Two there is little information to be found about the Norwegian-Canadian community, which might suggest that they had become assimilated into the Canadian mainstream. The first part of this chapter covers a brief history of the Norwegian ethnic group during the Depression and War, and shows how the acculturation of Norwegian Canadians grew most severe after World War II. In the difficult years of pioneering, depression and war, it seems like the Norwegian immigrants to western Canada focused more on adapting than on retaining their culture. Life in relatively small Norwegian settlements on the prairie fostered cooperation with other ethnic groups through school building, wheat pools and co-operatives. This was especially felt during the Great Depression. Norwegians found themselves even more scattered than before because of the search for work and farmland, and that made it harder to maintain the Norwegian language and traditions. Evidently, during the Depression and World War II, Norwegian Canadians lost hallmarks of their ethnicity, such as language, which seems to have led to greater acculturation of the Norwegian ethnic group, yet attempts were still made to retain a Norwegian heritage in Canada.

After this discussion, the chapter focuses on the factors that led to Canadian policy changes in the wake of World War II. It maps out the main tendencies that led to the formulation of the Multiculturalism Policy in 1971, and argues that although the political climate in Quebec was a key factor, the contributions of ethnic groups, with the Ukrainians as the main leaders, were essential as well. Other groups, such as Japanese Canadians, were also anxious for acknowledgment by the Canadian government, and from the mid 1950s and especially during the 1960s and 1970s we see a growing tendency also among Canadians of Norwegian descent to assert their ethnic heritage, albeit with a more Scandinavian outlook than a strictly Norwegian one. The chapter further notes specific gains ethnic groups made with a heavy emphasis on the Norwegian Canadian group in Alberta, exemplified through the Solglyt Lodge in Edmonton. When the Multiculturalism Policy opened a space for ethnicities, and indeed rewarded groups who could deploy their ethnicity advantageously, we see that Norwegian Canadians, together with other Scandinavian groups, were part of this. In spite of greater acculturation tendencies they had not abandoned their Norwegian heritage completely,

and they invented and re-invented their ethnicity and customs based on their pioneering experience to access these rewards. While this chapter covers the efforts they made in the move to Multiculturalism and the rewards they reaped, chapter four focuses on what the reformulated Norwegian-Canadian identity looked like. The political climate in Canada from the 1950s to the 1970s was coloured by Quebecois nationalism and ethnic assertion and participation, and although Norwegian Canadians were not at the forefront of the drive towards Multiculturalism they were influenced by and gained from the movement.

### ***Norwegian Canadians in the West from the 1930s to 1960***

The Great Depression led to a further scattering of the Norwegian communities in the prairie west. In an attempt to try to avoid the drought and extremely difficult situation, many Norwegian settlers moved either further north in the prairie provinces or further west into British Columbia. Although it is difficult to total the number of families who were forced to leave, the decreasing number of Lutheran congregations, especially in the area described as the Palliser Triangle in southern Alberta and Saskatchewan, indicates that Norwegian communities were breaking up. Whereas there had been 140 such congregations in the Palliser Triangle in 1920, only 70 remained in 1945.<sup>1</sup> This clearly suggests that it became much more difficult to maintain Norwegian traditions since families increasingly found themselves far away from other Norwegians. However, this, in itself, was not the only reason for increased acculturation. As mentioned in chapter two, most immigrants worked hard to establish a future for their families. When the Depression hit, the prairie west underwent massive changes. Gerald Friesen argues that these years were as important in the shaping of the region as the pioneering period, since the people on the prairies faced the crisis together. The founding of co-operative movements, wheat boards as well as new farming techniques came as a result of the determination of the people, especially in the southern prairies, where the Depression hit the hardest, to face the problems together.<sup>2</sup> The Depression was a trying time for many people and cooperation across ethnic cultural lines the only solution if one wanted to stay on the land. Norwegian settlers were actively involved in co-operative movements and wheat boards. Their political sentiments had in general been more left-of-centre, egalitarianism was the ideal for many, and Gulbrand Loken says many Norwegians therefore were called radicals by the British-Canadian elites.<sup>3</sup> It is therefore likely that they, like Friesen argues, formed bonds with other ethnic groups during the trying times, since

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<sup>1</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 105 and 115-116.

<sup>2</sup> Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, 382-394.

<sup>3</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 124.

every family on the prairie experienced hardships. This in turn may have contributed to further acculturation. With the mass migration that was taking place it would evidently also be more difficult to receive help only from Norwegian settlers. Although they did receive some aid from the Norwegian Lutheran church, their finances were bleak. However, there was some cooperation between Norwegian Canadians and Norwegian Americans during the Depression, showing that they did not completely abandon their ethnic group in time of need. By 1936, 60 per cent of the Norwegian Lutheran parishes in Canada received so-called Home Mission Aid from the United States.<sup>4</sup> However, this aid does not seem to have slowed down either the Norwegian Canadians' migration or their acculturation. Like Orm Øverland has suggested, everyday life in the new country was more important to the immigrants than sentimental thoughts about their former home country, and this seems to hold especially true for the Norwegians in western Canada during the Depression.<sup>5</sup>

Just as the Great Depression brought ethnic groups in the prairie west together, World War II seems to have contributed to their further Canadianization. During the war some ethnic groups experienced prejudice because it was feared that they were enemies of Canada. The Japanese were especially vulnerable and were sent to internment camps. British-Canadian values were deemed supreme and it became more important than ever to prove one's loyalty to Canada.<sup>6</sup> However, Norwegians did not experience a lot of prejudice, and were largely accepted by the elites. Oddly enough, this may have increased the assimilationist tendencies, since there was not the same need to assemble and fight for their identity or rights.<sup>7</sup> In spite of this, it is likely that they wanted to prove their loyalty for instance through enlisting in the army and buying victory bonds. Unfortunately there are not a lot of sources regarding Norwegian Canadians during the war, but Loken mentions that in Toronto, a Norwegian air-force training base, Camp Little Norway, was established, which was the first foreign base on Canadian soil. The cooperation that existed between Canada and Norway at this base is described by Loken in flattering terms, and it seems a reasonable conjecture to make that the base was a source of pride to Norwegian Canadians during the war.<sup>8</sup>

In chapter two it was noted that Norwegian pioneers established what Orm Øverland calls homemaking myths. A third category of homemaking myths Øverland mentions is the

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 110-111.

<sup>5</sup> Orm Øverland, "Hjemlandsmyter:" 143-144.

<sup>6</sup> Aya Fujiwara, "From Anglo-Conformity to Multiculturalism: The Role of Scottish, Ukrainian, and Japanese Ethnicity in the Transformation of Canadian Identity, 1919-1971" (PhD diss., University of Alberta, 2007), 105-108.

<sup>7</sup> Palmer and Palmer, *Alberta: A New History*, 466.

<sup>8</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 121-123.

“blodoffer myte [sic.]” – “blood sacrifice myth” – which manifests that the immigrants fought and died for their new homeland.<sup>9</sup> Although Norwegians had participated in the Great War and Camp Little Norway was established during World War II, at first glance it does not seem like this myth manifested itself to a great extent among Norwegians in Canada. Again, it is likely that during a time of crisis the need to cooperate and stand together became more important to the Norwegian immigrants than a manifestation of their Norwegian heritage. On the other hand, the lack of sources from this period cannot be taken as proof that such a myth did not manifest itself. For instance, the German occupation of Norway led to activities among the Sons of Norway in the United States. The lodge in Minneapolis, for instance, founded the Camp Little Norway Association to provide medical and recreational welfare to the Norwegian fighting forces. The association quickly established chapters all over the United States, and it is likely that Canadian lodges also contributed.<sup>10</sup> Frances Swyripa has argued that for some ethnic groups during the war “a solidarity of interests and cooperation between the homeland and Canada reinforced a positive image of possessing right values.”<sup>11</sup> She further notes that Norway’s airmen trained in Edmonton under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan and that this “not only demonstrated Canada’s commitment to liberating the Nazi-occupied country but also assured Norwegian Canadians that they could campaign for their homeland with impunity.”<sup>12</sup>

This cooperation, then, opened up for more widespread campaigns among Norwegian Canadians. Sigurd Sorenson relates that he was not drafted due to being a teacher, but he helped in the war effort by supporting the Association for War Relief in Scandinavia led by Jorgen Bjørnstad from Camrose, Alberta.<sup>13</sup> This shows that some Norwegian Canadians did feel connected to Norway and wanted to provide relief to their former fellow countrymen, just like Norwegian Americans. However, it is uncertain how widespread this association was, and with the lack of sources it is difficult to conclude whether or not Norwegian Canadians linked the war effort to a specific compassion for Norway. At any rate, ties to the homeland seem to have been more important to certain other ethnic groups. Ukrainian-Canadian nationalists, for instance, experienced a renewed sense of community through their campaigns for an independent Ukraine during the war years. Despite of the great suspicion among the mainstream elite in Canada concerning nationalist tendencies, the homeland became “a

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<sup>9</sup> Øverland, “Hjemlandsmyter,” 148.

<sup>10</sup> Norborg, *An American Saga*, 123-124.

<sup>11</sup> Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes*, 139.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>13</sup> Sorenson, *My Memoirs*, 87.

unifying force throughout the war regardless of the difficulties it presented” to Ukrainian-Canadian nationalists.<sup>14</sup> Although Norway was under attack, we do not see the same massive unifying tendencies among Norwegian Canadians, indicating that they had been acculturated to a larger extent.

Other features also suggest that the Norwegian community experienced a good deal of assimilation to Canadian society after World War II. One example of this is the high intermarriage rates. According to the 1931 Census, approximately 54 per cent of Scandinavian men and 52 per cent of Scandinavian women married outside their ethnic group, and a high number married Canadians of British descent.<sup>15</sup> According to Richard Alba, high intermarriage rates among white Americans in the United States suggest that ethnic identity was dwindling in these groups. Instead of, for example, speaking of Italian Americans or Norwegian Americans, he asserts that we can now talk about a new ethnic group; European Americans. Ethnic identity, according to Alba, has no other function than being symbolic in the European American groups.<sup>16</sup> This seems to hold true for Norwegians in Canada in the 1940s and 1950s. Second or third generation Norwegians did not marry within the ethnic group to a large extent, and there were no large public celebrations of their heritage, like the earlier Norse festival in Camrose in 1926. Also, by looking at local histories it is clear that naming trends no longer followed especially Norwegian patterns. Robert and Marthea Aker, for instance, named their children Myrtle, Pearl, Rudolph, Floyd, Norman, Adeline and Bea, which, except for Rudolph and Norman, would have been unlikely choices in Norway.<sup>17</sup> Another fact to consider is the relatively high educational status of Norwegian Canadians, which made them attractive to employers and contributed to increased urbanization of the ethnic group.<sup>18</sup> In addition, Norwegian immigration to Canada was drastically reduced after World War II. The percentage of foreign-born Scandinavians decreased from 62.4 per cent in 1921 to 27.1 per cent in 1961.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the recruitment to the group was not great, and with the loss of the Norwegian language in the Lutheran church, religion lost some of its ethnic influence.<sup>20</sup> In combination, these factors indicate that Norwegian Canadians experienced a good deal of assimilation after World War II.

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<sup>14</sup> Fujiwara, "From Anglo-Conformity to Multiculturalism:" 113.

<sup>15</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 197.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Alba, *Ethnic Identity*, 11-13.

<sup>17</sup> Helen Lindroth, comp., *We Came and We Stayed*, 39, and Rutledge and Liknes, *A Treasure of Memories*, 214.

<sup>18</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 198-199.

<sup>19</sup> Burnet and Palmer, "Coming Canadians," 70.

<sup>20</sup> Loken, *From Fjord to Frontier*, 224.

However, some examples of ethnic awareness among Norwegians can be found which suggest that the assimilation argument is only partially true. The fact that we do not have many accounts written about Norwegian Canadians and relatively few sources that mention them after World War II certainly suggests that the ethnic group had been marginalized. Nevertheless, the Solglyt Lodge and other Sons of Norway lodges were still active. In 1946, for instance, 350 members from lodges in northern and central Alberta and Vancouver joined together for a *lutefisk*<sup>21</sup> dinner in Edmonton.<sup>22</sup> Also, Sigurd Sorenson got involved in promoting the building of a Scandinavian Centre in Edmonton in 1953. He relates that in the same year, the radio station CKUA broadcasted a Scandinavian hour every other Sunday which was well received. The men who hosted the show came up with the idea of finding a meeting place where Scandinavians could band together. The idea became a reality through The Scandinavian Centre Co-Operative Association Ltd. (the Scandinavian Centre), and from 1953 to 1958 the Scandinavian Centre hosted different activities, such as the First annual Scandinavian Night (Scandapades) and the First annual Scandinavian Day at Elk Park in 1954, as well as the publishing of *Scandinavian Centre News* in 1958. On April 28, 1954 the Scandinavian Centre was incorporated under the Co-operative Act of the Province of Alberta.<sup>23</sup> Although the actual building was not erected until 1963, the work these men started most certainly shows that there were still people of Norwegian descent who cherished their heritage, albeit with a more Scandinavian than a strictly Norwegian outlook. With a small Norwegian-Canadian community in Edmonton, the Scandinavian Centre would be a more viable project if it became a project shared between all the tree Scandinavian groups. Yet, Sorenson relates that they had to spend a lot of work on advertizing, both on the radio and in person, in order to get people involved.<sup>24</sup> Thus, by 1960, the Norwegian ethnic group in Canada was markedly less active than what it had been prior to the Depression and the Second World War, yet there were individuals who still worked concertedly to get it up and going again. One could thus argue that the construction of a Norwegian- or Scandinavian-Canadian identity was underway in the 1950s and 1960s.

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<sup>21</sup> Dried cod treated with lye.

<sup>22</sup> "Lutefisk Dinner Enjoyed By 350," December 18, 1946, in "Edmonton Clubs: Sons of Norway," newspaper clipping received from the City of Edmonton Archives, March 8, 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Sorenson, *My Memoirs*, 141-142.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 141-153.



## ***Changes in the Canadian Political Landscape in the 1940s-1960s***

While the Norwegian-Canadian group seems to have become more assimilated during the 1940s and 1950s, other ethnic groups became more united through their fight for acknowledgment. One of the reasons for this was Canada's role in World War II and the fight for democracy in Europe. While human rights and democracy was put on the agenda and deliberately fought for in Europe, the Japanese Canadians, for instance, had been relocated, interned, and their property confiscated in Canada. Thus, during the war, Japanese Canadians demanded the end to racism and internment and called for the right to vote. Ukrainian-Canadian nationalists were also concerned with gaining equal rights and pushed for a broad acceptance of ethnic pluralism.<sup>25</sup> It became a paradox that discrimination was condemned abroad when not all Canadians experienced equal rights. For instance, with the establishment of institutions like the United Nations and its Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Canadian political leaders' changed their attitudes to ethnic groups. Among other changes, there was a gradual removal of discriminatory policies both nationally and provincially, and in 1947 the Canadian Citizenship Act was enacted. Internationally, Canada wanted to be seen as a full-fledged world power and as a peace keeper, and domestically democracy and equal rights were used as means to create national unity through making the citizens feel proud of being members of a democratic nation, and eradicate ethnic tension.<sup>26</sup> That is not to say that racism was completely eliminated from Canadian society and policy-making processes. For instance, the Immigration Act kept race as a category of selection until February 1962.<sup>27</sup> However, the fear of enemy aliens which had heightened ethnic tension during World War II, resulted in policies that helped pave the way for acknowledgment of ethnic groups in the decades after the war. Norwegian Canadians did not suffer from discrimination and thus did not need to fight for their political rights in the same way as the Japanese or Ukrainian nationalists did. This could partly explain why they were not as active after the war as they had been before the Depression.

While ethnic groups, led by Ukrainian nationalists, fought for acknowledgment, the Canadian government faced another threat to national unity. French-Canadian nationalism and separatism started flourishing in the province of Quebec. French Canadians and political leaders in the province threatened to secede from the dominion. While ethnic groups wanted acknowledgment of their ethnicity, French Canadians, in Quebec especially, wanted

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<sup>25</sup> Fujiwara, "From Anglo-Conformity to Multiculturalism," 106.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-149.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

acknowledgment of their status as a founding nation. British values and symbols were reflected in Canadian public life and had done so since confederation. It has been argued that citizens need to see parts of their private identities upheld by public institutions in order for them to feel valued and at home. If the institutions to a great degree mirror one dominant group, others tend to feel alienated and left out. The British dominance in public life had always been problematic for Quebec, but it culminated in the 1960s. In fact, Raymond Breton claims that while in the past the protests had been rather quiet, now “[g]roups and individuals more often chose to challenge, rather than appropriate or disengage.”<sup>28</sup> The federal government saw a need to resolve the situation in a rapid manner, and Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson established the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism (the B&B Commission) on July 19, 1963 as one solution to the crisis.<sup>29</sup>

### ***The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism***

The B&B Commission’s task was to “enquire into and report on the existing state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada and to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races, taking into account the contributions made by the other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada.”<sup>30</sup> One notes the now dated use of the word “race” to denote ethnicity or cultural groups even as late as the 1960s. Although other ethnic groups were believed to have culturally enriched Canada, it was to be publicly acknowledged that Canada consisted of two distinct founding nations. Even more strikingly, the B&B Commission proposed that Canada should develop “an equal partnership” between French and British Canada. Considering that about twenty five per cent of the Canadian population were neither British nor French, this proposal produced some uneasiness among other ethnic groups, and they feared that they would be defined as second-class citizens.<sup>31</sup> The B&B Commission heightened ethnic awareness among these other groups, and Ukrainian Canadians were in the

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<sup>28</sup> As quoted in Gary Miedema, “For Canada’s Sake: The Centennial Celebrations of 1967, State Legitimation and the Restructuring of Canadian Public Life,” *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d’études canadiennes*, No. 1, Vol. 34 (1999): 139-140, accessed February 22, 2011, <http://login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/login?url=http://proquest.umi.com/login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/pqdw eb?did=51978675&sid=1&Fmt=6&clientId=12301&RQT=309&VName=PQD>

<sup>29</sup> Jean Burnet, “Multiculturalism 10 Years Later,” in *Two Nations, Many Cultures: Ethnic Groups in Canada*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Jean Leonard Elliott (Scarborough, Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1983), 236.

<sup>30</sup> As quoted in, John W. Friesen, *When Cultures Clash: Case Studies in Multiculturalism* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1993), 7.

<sup>31</sup> Raymond Breton, “Multiculturalism and Canadian Nation-Building,” in *The Politics of Gender, Ethnicity and Language in Canada* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press in cooperation with the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada and the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, 1986), 44.

forefront disputing that Canada was a *bicultural* nation.<sup>32</sup> The first reports coming from the B&B Commission were criticized for not taking other ethnic groups into account, and partly due to this discontent the term the “Third Force” was introduced by Paul Yuzyk, a Ukrainian-Canadian MP, in his maiden speech in the Senate. The term implied that Canada consisted of three groups; one British, one French, and one consisting of all other ethnic groups in Canada, aboriginals included. This “Third Force” would be capable of mediating between the other two groups.<sup>33</sup> Such a stance underlined that the Ukrainian-Canadian elite did not just fight for special rights for their own group, although they did this too, but showed the government that there were many other Canadians who wanted the same type of acknowledgment. According to Aya Fujiwara, however, the problem was that the “Third Force” term was mainly used when addressing mainstream leaders and rarely introduced to other ethnic groups.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the Ukrainian-Canadian elite was the most active and visible group in the push for multiculturalism, and there was in essence no unified “Third Force” although other ethnic groups were active as well. In 1969, the Official Languages Act was introduced, further underlining the duality of the Canadian nation.<sup>35</sup> Yet, the protests from ethnic groups, led by the Ukrainian Canadians, were successful in that on October 29, 1969, the B&B Commission added Book IV to their report; *The Cultural Contribution of the Other Ethnic Groups*.<sup>36</sup>

Book IV set out to fulfil the second requirement the government of Canada gave the B&B Commission; “taking into account the contributions made by the other ethnic groups to the cultural enrichment of Canada and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution.”<sup>37</sup> This fourth volume upheld the notion that Canada was bilingual and “possess[ed] two predominant cultures that have produced two societies - Francophone and Anglophone - which form two distinct communities within an overall Canadian context.”<sup>38</sup> Yet, the Commission had tried to listen to demands from various ethnic groups, in addition to noting how other ethnic groups had contributed to Canada in areas such as economics, politics, media, and the arts. Also, the volume set out to map general immigration trends, how certain groups had adapted to a Canadian way of life, and the degree to which different groups were anxious to retain their language and culture. Their research culminated in sixteen

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<sup>32</sup> Friesen, *When Cultures Clash*, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Burnet and Palmer, “Coming Canadians,” 224.

<sup>34</sup> Fujiwara, “From Anglo-Conformity to Multiculturalism,” 242.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

<sup>36</sup> Royal Commission of Bilingualism and Biculturalism. *The Cultural Contribution of Other Ethnic Groups*, Book IV, 1969. Accessed February 22, 2011, <http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/pco-bcp/commissions-ef/dunton1967-1970-ef/dunton1967-70-vol4-eng/dunton1967-70-vol4-part1-eng.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Burnet, “Multiculturalism 10 Years Later,” 236.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

recommendations, among them being that all Canadians, regardless of background or ethnicity, should have equal rights to voting, employment, education, and housing, and that, where numbers warranted it, languages other than English and French could be incorporated as options in the public school system. The Commission also recommended that universities expand their fields of humanities and social studies to include areas other than English- or French-speaking areas, and that appropriate federal, provincial and municipal agencies receive financial means to support ethnic groups and organizations in promoting, researching and maintaining their culture.<sup>39</sup> The report partly became the basis for a new Multiculturalism Policy.

In order to influence the B&B Commission, immigrant groups chose to voice their opinion by submitting briefs. French Canadians were eager to promote their culture and wanted to have Quebec singled out as a distinct society. It was also feared that recognition of Multiculturalism would obliterate such a special status for the province, giving all ethnic groups the same rights and privileges. Not surprisingly, therefore, they submitted the most briefs, numbering 118 in total. Ukrainian Canadians were the second most active, submitting a total of 39 briefs to the B&B Commission. In their briefs they stressed the Ukrainians' leading role in building the Canadian west, and they believed that in return the government should aid them in retaining their language and culture. Canada was a multicultural, not bicultural, nation, and Canadians of Ukrainian descent therefore thought the government should support their cultural group in the same way as the British and the French.<sup>40</sup> Since French Canadians in Quebec were concerned with gaining equal status with British Canadians, they did not fully acknowledge such appeals for linguistic and cultural pluralism.<sup>41</sup> Other ethnic groups submitted briefs as well, among them being one by Japanese Canadians. They were the only visible minority group to submit a brief. Understandably, their concern with multiculturalism was equal rights and the end to prejudice and discrimination, not financial support for retaining their culture.<sup>42</sup>

So far we have seen that the Ukrainian Canadians were the ethnic group which tried to influence the federal government the most to acknowledge multiculturalism. Norwegian Canadians did not make any demands concerning special privileges from the government. Yet, among the briefs submitted to the B&B Commission, there was one submitted by the

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 228-230.

<sup>40</sup> Fujiwara, "From Anglo-Conformity to Multiculturalism," 239 and 272.

<sup>41</sup> Anthony H. Richmond, "Immigration and Multiculturalism in Canada and Australia: The Contradictions and Crises of the 1980s," *International Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue Internationale D'Etudes Canadiennes* 3 (Spring 1991): 104.

<sup>42</sup> Fujiwara, "From Anglo-Conformity to Multiculturalism," 257.

Scandinavian Centre Co-operative Association Ltd. in Edmonton, referred to as the Scandinavian Society in the brief.<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, they did not ask for any special support for Scandinavians in Canada. In this way they differed from for example the Ukrainian Canadians. Yet, the Scandinavian Society was promoted indirectly through explaining its aims and historical contributions to Canada, just like the Ukrainian Canadians noted their contributions to Canada. The Scandinavian Society aimed “to preserve the best in our old Scandinavian culture and introduce it into our multi-cultural society, and to assist immigrants from Scandinavia to become good Canadians.”<sup>44</sup> The way in which it was phrased looks strikingly similar to articles in the early Norwegian ethnic press. Immigrants from Scandinavian countries were to be introduced to Canadian ways; yet, Scandinavian culture had something to offer Canada as well. This idea of cultural contribution has also been apparent among Norwegian Americans.<sup>45</sup> The society further acknowledged that Canada was a multicultural country, which perhaps made it more important for Canadians of Scandinavian descent to make their own cultural contributions to enrich Canadian society.

The Scandinavian brief did not, however, state what the best in the old Scandinavian culture was. Still, an analysis of the brief offers a couple of suggestions. Like the Ukrainian Canadians, the Scandinavian brief stressed the role Scandinavians had played in developing western Canada through their work in agriculture, lumbering, mining, fishing and construction, and they noted how quickly Scandinavians learned English and became respected Canadian citizens. This was to a large degree due to their “coming from advanced, democratic countries and being willing to work and learn.”<sup>46</sup> This suggests that they wanted the B&B Commission to see the legitimacy of their opinion by invoking Scandinavians’ important position in Canadian history. Although Scandinavians for the most part had settled in the west the brief stressed that “Scandinavian immigrants have played a leading role in the development in Canada.”<sup>47</sup> Thus, they implied that all of Canada had gained from Scandinavians’ contributions in the occupations they mentioned. In the brief they also pointed out that the members of the Commission “have possibly noticed that five Alberta Cabinet Ministers have Scandinavian names. This indicates the standing of Canadians of Scandinavian

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<sup>43</sup> The *Scandinavian Society* is the same association as the *Scandinavian Centre*, mentioned previously in this chapter.

<sup>44</sup> Scandinavian Centre Co-operative Association Limited, “Brief,” Brief submitted to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, December 6, 1965, 1.

<sup>45</sup> See for example O. E. Rølvaag, “Simple Reflections on Our Heritage,” in *Concerning Our Heritage*, trans. Solveig Zempel (Northfield: The Norwegian American Historical Association, 1998), 53.

<sup>46</sup> Scandinavian Centre Co-operative Association Limited, “Brief,” 3.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

descent in our multicultural society.”<sup>48</sup> These quotes are interesting for two reasons. One, we learn that they were looking back at the pioneer era as a means of claiming a position for themselves in Canadian society. Two, the Scandinavian contributions were not just remnants of the past. Politically they were still contributing greatly. In fact, the Scandinavian Society noted that their political involvement indicated their standing in multicultural Canada. It is evident that the Alberta Cabinet Ministers were a source of pride to them and gave them increased importance. Thus, although the brief did not ask for special protection or financial support, they managed to show the B&B Commission that Scandinavians were pertinent to both the past as well as the present building of Canada.

Although the Scandinavian brief portrayed Canadians of Scandinavian descent in flattering terms, the main objective of sending a brief seems to have been to promote English-speaking Canada.<sup>49</sup> In fact, the brief is remarkably anti-French in its stance. The importance of the French language at the time of Confederation was noted, however, the Scandinavian Society did not think that bilingualism should be mandatory. English had by now gained an international standing that no other language could compete with, so, they claimed, “there is very little need for an English-speaking person to learn other languages.”<sup>50</sup> Some language study may be needed, but it should be optional, and languages such as Russian and German would be more needed than French. Their conclusion was that “the only place where bilingualism is needed is in French-speaking Canada.”<sup>51</sup> A large portion of the brief was concerned with French-Canadian backwardness and how Canadians of French descent outside of Quebec did not want to live in Quebec or gain a distinct status. This they based on a letter from the *Edmonton Journal*, written by a Canadian of French descent living outside of Quebec, which they claimed spoke “for the great majority of French Canadians in four-fifths of Canada.”<sup>52</sup> The letter explained how French Canadians outside of Quebec received equal treatment and refused to be forced to live in the predominantly French-speaking province. Evidently, the author did not want a distinct status for himself. The Scandinavian Society also noted that compared to the English-speaking population, the French-speaking population would not survive. Due to intermarriage with other ethnic groups outside of Quebec, they claimed, “French is doomed to disappear in a few more generations.”<sup>53</sup> Even more striking, the Scandinavian Society gave English-speaking Canadians credit for building almost all of

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

Canada. According to their calculations, three-fourths of Canada was English-speaking and multicultural, and English-speaking Canadians were the ones who “had the vision and initiative to colonize the rest of Canada.”<sup>54</sup> Thus, although Scandinavian Canadians invoked the same historical argument as the Ukrainian Canadians did, it seems like the society was less inclined to support multiculturalism in the sense Ukrainian Canadians did, and instead tried to influence the B&B Commission so that the government would not acknowledge French as a language equal to English.

Although the Scandinavian brief favoured English over French it is clear that by *English-speaking Canada* they did not mean *Anglo-conformity*; the policy which had been supported by the Canadian government up until this point. The Scandinavian Society’s main point was that English-speaking Canada included the great majority of Canadians who were contributing to Canada’s multicultural nation. Quebec, on the other hand, had not received many immigrants and was sceptical towards immigration for fear that the province would lose its French characteristics and distinctiveness. Thus, the Scandinavian Society’s concluding remarks were: “We stand for a strong, democratic English-speaking Canada, and we feel confident that it will come in time. It is impossible for a small group to alter the natural trend of progress.”<sup>55</sup>

What these developments indicate is that ethnicity becomes more apparent when ethnic groups become interest groups and part of a political process. In such situations, ethnic groups act on behalf of a great number of people with similar claims, trying to achieve group rights.<sup>56</sup> This is certainly true for some of the groups working to implement multiculturalism in Canada in the 1960s. The Ukrainian elite experienced an upsurge since they felt like they were finally listened to. The brief sent by the Scandinavian Society did not make any demands, but the group voiced its opinion and made a tentative conjecture about the future of Canada. Their argument seems to have been that only English-speaking Canada would maintain and strengthen the multicultural nature of Canada. Despite the lack of demands, it seems as though the Scandinavian Society believed it was speaking on behalf of most English-speaking ethnic Canadians. This could perhaps be linked to the belief that Scandinavian Canadians were highly respected citizens with an important standing in “our

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Alba, *Ethnic Identity*, 28.

multicultural country.”<sup>57</sup> Their identity seems to have been tied to their past contributions through their settlement of the west, as well as their present political participation.

This new involvement in multicultural policy can be seen as the beginning of a new ethnic awareness among some Canadians of Norwegian, or other Scandinavian, descent. Although they did not ask for special acknowledgment or support, it is interesting that they were among the 14 ethnic groups<sup>58</sup> which tried to influence the B&B Commission.<sup>59</sup>

### ***The Emergence of the Multiculturalism Policy***

In 1970, the B&B Commission published its report, and the charter status of the French was supported and encouraged. A number of ethnic groups were opposed to the endorsement of charter nations in the report, because it implied that other nationalities had not contributed in the founding of Canada and consequently did not matter. As a result of the objections to calling Canada a bicultural nation and the B&B Commission’s book on the other ethnic groups and their contributions to Canada, Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau announced the Multiculturalism Policy on October 8, 1971. The policy would complement the Official Languages Act, which had reinforced Canada’s bilingual nature. Canada was now officially a multicultural nation, but the policy worked within a bilingual framework.<sup>60</sup> Despite their brief, the Scandinavian Society had not been successful in promoting bilingualism for Quebec only. Prime Minister Trudeau emphasized that to achieve national unity, all Canadians had to be confident in their own identity. This further suggests that the policy was enacted more as a result of threats to national unity, than as a complete acknowledgment of the contributions of ethnic groups other than English and French Canadians in the building of Canada. Trudeau expressed his views thus:

National unity if it is to mean anything in the deeply personal sense, must be founded on confidence in one’s own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and a willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions. A vigorous policy of multiculturalism will help create this initial confidence.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Scandinavian Centre Co-operative Association Limited, “Brief,” 3.

<sup>58</sup> *Scandinavians* are here counted as one ethnic group, not three, since they together had organized an ethnic organization and submitted a brief on behalf of it.

<sup>59</sup> Fujiwara, “From Anglo-Conformity to Multiculturalism,” 272.

<sup>60</sup> Friesen, *When Cultures Clash*, 7-8.

<sup>61</sup> Jean Burnet, “We and They: Remarks about Multiculturalism and Ethnic Attitudes in Canada,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies/Etudes ethniques au Canada* 10:1 (1978): 53, accessed February 25, 2011, [http://pao.chadwyck.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/articles/displayItem.do?QueryType=articles&QueryIndex=journal&ResultsID=12DC1A9D9DE931AE5&ItemNumber=9&BackTo=journalid&BackToParam=QueryType=journals|ItemID=f765|issue=10:1 \(1978\)&journalID=f765](http://pao.chadwyck.com.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/articles/displayItem.do?QueryType=articles&QueryIndex=journal&ResultsID=12DC1A9D9DE931AE5&ItemNumber=9&BackTo=journalid&BackToParam=QueryType=journals|ItemID=f765|issue=10:1 (1978)&journalID=f765).



Trudeau's speech corresponds to Raymond Breton's argument that citizens who do not see their personal identities reflected in the public institutions consequently feel alienated. In this sense, the Multiculturalism Policy could be seen as an identity policy, fitted to encourage Canadians of all backgrounds and ethnicities to, in the words of Trudeau, become "confiden[t] in [their] own individual identity," with support from the Canadian government. This would create national unity, and Will Kymlicka notes that the policy was indeed not meant to create separate societies within the Canadian mainstream. Rather, it would give ethnic groups the opportunity to contribute new options and perspectives and thereby enrich the larger Anglophone culture.<sup>62</sup> The main aims of the policy were to promote equality for all Canadians by, among other means, assisting people to overcome cultural barriers that hindered them from full participation in Canadian society, assisting immigrants to acquire at least one of the official languages so they could become full participants in society, supporting all of Canada's cultures, assisting the development of cultural groups which had "demonstrated a desire and effort to continue to develop," and promoting cultural interchange in Canadian society.<sup>63</sup> It appears, then, that some of the demands put forward by the Canadians of Ukrainian descent had been listened to. The groups which wanted to retain their culture would be aided, resources permitting. By 1973-1974, the federal multicultural program had a budget of \$10 million, in addition to programs initiated by individual provinces.<sup>64</sup> The policy itself acknowledged that Canadians were different although they were alike, and that no culture was superior to others. The idea behind it was termed "unity in diversity," and the grants would ensure that different cultures could flourish side by side and the interchange would have a positive effect on the Canadian mosaic.<sup>65</sup> The intent was that all Canadians would fully participate in society and feel valued.

In order to avoid feelings of alienation in Canadian public life, additional changes to the public policy were made. In 1972, the federal government appointed a minister of state with responsibility for multiculturalism, and in 1973 a consultative council to help the minister was set up. Preferential treatment of British subjects who applied for Canadian citizenship was abolished in the Citizenship Act in 1977, and in the same year the Canadian Human Rights Act was passed, outlawing discrimination on grounds of race, national or

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<sup>62</sup> Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 78-79.

<sup>63</sup> Friesen, *When Cultures Clash*, 8.

<sup>64</sup> David Ley, "Pluralism and the Canadian State," in *Geography & Ethnic Pluralism*, eds. Colin Clark, David Ley and Cerri Peach (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), 104.

<sup>65</sup> Wsevolod W. Isajiw, "Olga in Wonderland: Ethnicity in a Technological Society," in *The Canadian Ethnic Mosaic: A Quest for Identity*, ed. Leo Driedger (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), 37.

ethnic origin. In 1978 the Immigration Act was amended to reiterate principles of universality and non-discrimination. When the constitution was repatriated in 1982, multiculturalism was included in article 15 where equality before and under the law was established, and in particular in article 27 which stated: “[t]his charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians.”<sup>66</sup> On July 21, 1988, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act came into effect, finalizing the move from Anglo-conformity to multiculturalism in Canada.<sup>67</sup>

It has been argued that the Quiet Revolution in Quebec and the threat of secession was what led to the initiation of the Multiculturalism Policy, and not pressure from ethnic groups. The ethnic groups, or so-called “Third Force,” functioned as a counterpoise to the aspirations of French Canadians. Although they made some impact on the government, it was not decisive, according to Wsevolod W. Isajiw.<sup>68</sup> The counterargument is that while it had been possible to ignore these groups in the past, by 1971 they had become strong. The fact that they were seen as a potential counterpoise is evidence of this. They had become a sizable group that was enmeshed in all spheres of society.<sup>69</sup> Thus, even though they did not have identical claims and therefore did not truly form a “Third Force,” ethnic groups were an important factor. Some were more prominent than others, however. Canadians of Norwegian, or Scandinavian, descent tried to influence the B&B Commission by submitting a brief, but they made no specific demands. However, the Multiculturalism Policy actively supported cultural groups and the celebration of one’s heritage, and the implications of this were significant to all ethnic groups.

### ***Some Implications of the Multiculturalism Policy***

Not only was Multiculturalism officially acknowledged and prejudice and racism increasingly diminished in government policies, but monetary grants were offered to groups in order for them to develop and maintain their culture and traditions. The 1988 Canadian Multiculturalism Act stated that the government of Canada should “recognize the existence of communities whose members share a common origin and their historic contribution to Canadian society, and *enhance their development* (emphasis added).”<sup>70</sup> That is not to say that minority cultures had been completely ignored before 1971. In the annual report from the

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<sup>66</sup> Department of Justice, Government of Canada, *The Constitution Act* (1982), accessed February 25, 2011, <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/const/9.html#anchors:7>; and Burnet and Palmer, “*Coming Canadians*,” 225-226.

<sup>67</sup> Department of Justice, Government of Canada, *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* (1988), accessed February 25, 1988, <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/PDF/Statute/C/C-18.7.pdf>.

<sup>68</sup> Isajiw, “Multiculturalism and Integration,” 113-114.

<sup>69</sup> Burnet and Palmer, “*Coming Canadians*,” 224.

<sup>70</sup> Canadian Multiculturalism Act §3.1 (d).

Department of the Secretary of State of Canada from 1968 we see that the department had its own Folklore Division. Studies were conducted to study folk music in ethnic groups such as the Ukrainian Canadians and Icelandic Canadians, and “[h]eavy emphasis was placed on the folklore of several Canadian ethnic groups.”<sup>71</sup> However, the History Division focused on French and Anglo-Celtic history only.<sup>72</sup> In 1971, before the Multiculturalism Policy was announced, grants had been awarded to groups which were anxious to preserve their cultural heritage or work to implement the recommendations from the B&B Commission. Not surprisingly we find several Ukrainian groups among the recipients, but also groups of Chinese students, Jewish women, a Doukhobor choir, as well as multi-ethnic councils and conferences received financial support from the government.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to grants, history projects became more focused on ethnic groups, and the provinces, with the notable exception of Quebec, initiated their own Multiculturalism programs. The Citizenship Branch of the Department of the Secretary of State instigated a series of ethnic histories, of which Loken’s *From Fjord to Frontier* is part, as a response to the B&B Commission which recommended writing “histories specifically directed to the background, contributions and problems of various ethnic groups in Canada.”<sup>74</sup> The history of the charter groups had been written for decades, but now ethnic histories would shed light on other pioneers who had helped build the Canadian mosaic. The different provinces also acknowledged ethnic groups and supported them financially through their own Multiculturalism policies. In 1974, the government of Alberta, through the Minister of Culture, Dr. Horst A. Schmidt, declared the first Monday of August an annual holiday; Heritage Day.<sup>75</sup> In 1978, the Alberta Cultural Heritage Foundation was established to administer grants based on lottery funds, and an advisory body, the Department of Culture and Multiculturalism, was also established in the province. Four years before the federal Multiculturalism Act was enacted, in 1984, Alberta enacted its Alberta Cultural Heritage Act, emphasising the importance official multiculturalism had gained in the prairie province in the

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<sup>71</sup> Department of the Secretary of State of Canada, “Report of the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada for the year ending March 31 1968,” 36.

<sup>72</sup> The Anglo-Celtic history was mainly focused on England, but one research project about Irish immigration was also conducted. *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>73</sup> Secretary of State, “Secretary of State: Annual Report for the year ending March 31, 1971” (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1973), 6.

<sup>74</sup> As quoted in Jean Burnet and Howard Palmer, introduction to *From Fjord to Frontier: A History of the Norwegians in Canada*, by Gulbrand Loken (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd in association with the Multiculturalism Directorate, Department of the Secretary of State and the Canadian Government Publishing Centre, Supply and Services Canada, 1980), vi.

<sup>75</sup> Servus Heritage Festival, “The Festival History,” accessed March 21, 2011. <http://heritage-festival.com/the-festival-history/>,

last decade.<sup>76</sup> Thus, the main implication of the Multiculturalism Policy seems to have been an increased focus on, and active support of, ethnic groups through official acknowledgment of their participation in the building of Canada, which provided ethnic groups with an impetus to seek support and expand on their activities.

### ***Some Implications of the Multiculturalism Policy for Canadians of Norwegian Descent***

Although Canadians of Norwegian descent did not demand specific help or cultural protection from the government, they did benefit from the multiculturalism movement and policy. The most obvious way in which they benefitted was financially. As early as in the 1950s, Solglyt Lodge had through annual *lutefisk* suppers, participation in the Scandapades and by buying shares to build a Scandinavian Centre been anxious to preserve the Norwegian culture and promote it to their children, in addition to the city of Edmonton at large. In 1973 they initiated a pilot language and culture camp that eventually grew into a considerably large venture. A separate Trollhaugen Language Arts & Culture Society was later formed to “maintain camp continuity, solicit funding and facilitate planning.”<sup>77</sup> In only a few years, all Sons of Norway lodges in Alberta participated in the camp, and the responsibility for planning and running it was alternated between them. The Trollhaugen Language Arts and Culture Camp received money from both the federal and provincial governments, which made the planning and realization of the camp easier. In 1973 and 1974, Solglyt was awarded a \$1,000 grant from the government of Alberta “to be used for furthering cultural activities.”<sup>78</sup> This money was spent on the language camp. During the 1980s the financial grants from the Alberta Cultural Heritage Foundation increased to between \$3,000 and \$3,500. In addition to this, the camp received financial support from the federal government, totalling \$2,940 in 1988.<sup>79</sup> In fact, financial endowments from the federal government were awarded until 1990.<sup>80</sup> Other activities were supported as well, such as a Language Club, which received

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<sup>76</sup> Standing Committee on Multiculturalism, *Multiculturalism: Building the Canadian Mosaic. Report of the Standing Committee on Multiculturalism*, Issue No. 5, 126.

<sup>77</sup> Beatrice Daily Huser, *Trollhaugen Trove: Of Skits, Poems and Information* (Unpublished book, 1989), 2.

<sup>78</sup> Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meetings, Edmonton, Canada, March 14, 1973 and April 20, 1974, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>79</sup> Financial statements of Trollhaugen Language Arts & Cultural Society, List of Disbursements and Receipts 1987-1991, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>80</sup> In 1990, the lodge received a letter from the Secretary of State stating that no more grants would be given to the society due to cuts in government spending. From financial statements it looks as though the camp lost the provincial contribution soon thereafter, in 1991, after it had been more than halved from 1989 to 1990 (from \$3,500 to \$1,500). See Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meeting, Edmonton, Canada, April 9, 1990; and Financial statements of Trollhaugen Language Arts & Cultural Society, List of Disbursements and Receipts 1987-1991, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

\$450 in 1975, and the Scandinavian Heritage Society of Edmonton<sup>81</sup> received a \$4,600 grant from the provincial government in 1985 on behalf of the Valhalla folk dancing group.<sup>82</sup> In 1975, the federal government granted the lodge with \$2,000 “for continuous work in cultural and heritage activities,” suggesting that it could be spent on any activity the lodge saw fit.<sup>83</sup> A film project about Norwegians in Alberta was also financed and made by the provincial government in 1978, depicting a wide range of activities taking place in the Solglyt Lodge and at Trollhaugen.<sup>84</sup> Thus, the Multiculturalism Policy helped Norwegian Canadians increase their activities, which again contributed to an increased interest in their background and ethnic heritage and a wish to share it with others.

The other important way in which the Multiculturalism Policy affected Norwegian Canadians was in the recognition it signalled. Although the financial support was important, the acknowledgment ethnic organizations received from the government led to increased assertion of their heritage. According to the Standing Committee on Multiculturalism 1986-1987, the budget for Multiculturalism was “minimal in comparison with other programs;” thus it “can only be seen as something of a marginal policy.”<sup>85</sup> This underlines that the funding in itself was not enough to trigger an ethnic resurgence, and shows that the committee did not take into account the symbolic effect the policy had. Due to the formal recognition of all cultures, ethnic heritage days, displays and festivals were established, where ethnic groups could share with others their culture and contributions to Canada. This evidently led to increased activity in many groups, and in fact, Jean Burnet and Howard Palmer have noted that “[t]he fact that various levels of government recognize the contribution ethnic voluntary associations make to Canadian society has encouraged their formation and their continuance perhaps more than the grants themselves.”<sup>86</sup> Norwegian Canadians were no exception. In 1975, the Solglyt Lodge elected a representative to sit on the Alberta Heritage Council for a

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<sup>81</sup> A non-profit organization that was established in 1984 in order for the Scandinavians to participate in Heritage Days. The Scandinavian Centre Co-Operative Association Ltd. was a for-profit organization, and in 1983 the Edmonton Heritage Festival Association ruled that only non-profit organizations were allowed to participate in the Heritage Days. Information received from personal correspondence with Kenneth Domier, former president of Solglyt Lodge, the Scandinavian Centre Co-Operative Association Ltd and the Scandinavian Heritage Society of Edmonton, March 8, 2011.

<sup>82</sup> Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meeting, Edmonton, Canada, September 20, 1985, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>83</sup> Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meetings, Edmonton, Canada, March 12, 1975 and April 7, 1975, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>84</sup> The lodge notes “[t]hat a letter of thanks be sent to Horst Schmidt for making and giving us the film, ‘Norwegians in Alberta.’” Unfortunately, no records of the expenditure have been found. Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meeting, Edmonton, Canada, September 19, 1979, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>85</sup> Standing Committee on Multiculturalism, *Multiculturalism: Building the Canadian Mosaic. Report of the Standing Committee on Multiculturalism* (1986-87), Issue No. 5, xi.

<sup>86</sup> Burnet and Palmer, “*Coming Canadians*,” 194.

two-year period, and the lodge continued to send representatives for a number of years.<sup>87</sup> It was also asked to participate in the development of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of December 1984, the Minister of State for Multiculturalism, Jack B. Murta, sent a letter to Solglyt requesting its participation, and he noted that the nature of the Multiculturalism Policy and programs associated with it had evolved from being folkloric to addressing “more general and urgent concerns arising from the pluralistic nature of Canadian society.” In order to make the legislation effective and significant, Murta felt that he must consult with “those who understand its importance and upon whose lives it will have significant impact.”<sup>88</sup> It is evident that such correspondence had a vital effect. The lodge replied that government support, especially financial, would encourage more people to learn about their cultural heritage, which is important “to appreciate, understand and enjoy the culture of other people.”<sup>89</sup> They further noted that support was essential to preserve the cultural heritage of Norwegians in Canadian society at large, especially since few people could speak the language. That there was an interest was evident from the students who studied Norwegian at the University of Alberta, evening courses in Norwegian given by the Edmonton Public School Board, and the approximately 90 children and adults who attended the Trollhaugen Camp annually.<sup>90</sup> In 1971, during the planning and implementation of Alberta’s own policy, a Multiculturalism Conference was called. The Scandinavian Centre sent ten delegates, of whom two were Canadians of Norwegian descent.<sup>91</sup>

Involvement in these processes was important in increasing Norwegian Canadians’ cultural self-esteem, and this is evident by the amount of work they put into their pavilion at the Heritage Days. For a great number of years they won prizes in the category of best appearance, although they did not always win the first prize.<sup>92</sup> With the establishment of a Scandinavian Program at the University of Alberta in 1971, where Norwegian was taught, great interest and mobilization ensued to ensure a professoriate and enough students and

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<sup>87</sup> Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meeting, Edmonton, Canada, April 7, 1975, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>88</sup> Letter from Hon. Jack B Murta, Secretary of State for Multiculturalism, to the Solglyt Lodge, December 14, 1984, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>89</sup> Letter from the Solglyt Lodge to Hon. Jack B. Murta, Secretary of State for Multiculturalism, January 29, 1985,

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> “New Cultural Policy for Alberta,” *Scandinavian Centre News*, No. 8, Vol. 11, August, 1971, 1.

<sup>92</sup> See for example Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meetings, Edmonton, Canada, September 8, 1986 and September 12, 1995, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

funding to maintain it.<sup>93</sup> One of the ways in which this was done was to visit high schools in Edmonton to publicise the Norwegian courses that were available at the University.<sup>94</sup> Another important method was the establishment of the Scandinavian Studies Association (SSA), incorporated under the Society's Act on May 11, 1990, which started a massive fundraising campaign in 1990 in order to secure the B.A. Degree in Norwegian studies.<sup>95</sup> An associate organization of the Solglyt Lodge, *Torskeklubben*, helped the SSA by starting a Bursary Program, which awarded scholarships to high-achieving students in the Scandinavian program. In 1995, the SSA was informed by the Department of Germanic Languages that enrolments were increasing and that programs funded from outside the University would not be cut, thus the efforts of the SSA, helped by *Torskeklubben* and the Solglyt Lodge among others, had been successful.<sup>96</sup> In addition to these efforts, members of the Solglyt Lodge also performed folk dancing, folk music and put on cultural displays in shopping centres, nursing homes, the Alberta Provincial Museum, and in a wide range of schools in Edmonton.<sup>97</sup> While grants were important in starting certain activities, Norwegian Canadians participated in a number of arenas where no funding was received. In fact, in some instances it was quite the contrary; they spent large sums of money, for instance, to keep Norwegian as a subject of study at the University of Alberta. The involvement in these measures was voluntary, and in the next chapter we will see that in the period after 1971 this type of symbolic ethnicity played an important role. In the pioneer days, Norwegians had sought ethnic fellowships to aid and support each other in order to adapt to Canadian society. By 1971, Canadians of Norwegian descent were well-adapted and participation in ethnic activities was voluntary, often resulting in the expression of their culture being more explicit than it had been in the past.<sup>98</sup>

## **Concluding Remarks**

This chapter has shown that as a result of the Great Depression and the Second World War, Canadians of Norwegian descent were increasingly marginalized as a vital ethnic group.

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<sup>93</sup> See for example "Scandinavian Languages Taught at U. of A.," *Scandinavian Centre News*, No. 3, Vol. 11, March 1971, 1; and Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meeting, Edmonton, Canada, November 8, 1978, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>94</sup> Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meeting, Edmonton, Canada, February 13, 1980, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>95</sup> Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meeting, Edmonton, Canada, June 19, 1990, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>96</sup> Fall enrolments in 1995 were 145 half-year course registrations. *Nyheter*, October 1995.

<sup>97</sup> See for example Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meetings, Edmonton, Canada, April 20, 1974, January 12, 1980, October 8, 1980, and June 1, 1982, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>98</sup> Gans, "Symbolic Ethnicity," 434-436.

Fewer settlements contained large and strong Norwegian segments, and the troubles Norwegian Canadians were facing got first priority and had to be solved in cooperation with other Canadians, often of different ethnic backgrounds. However, there were a few Canadians who supported Norwegian soldiers through the Association for War Relief in Scandinavia, and the Sons of Norway lodges continued to function. In other words, in spite of decreased ethnic activity, a Norwegian-Canadian identity did not entirely die out during these years. In the years after the War, Canada experienced internal turmoil in Quebec, and this combined with pressure from ethnic groups, Ukrainian Canadians in particular, led to policy changes in immigration, language and cultural policies. The B&B Commission stated that other ethnic groups had contributed significantly to the building of Canada, however, it still proposed that Canada was a bilingual and bicultural nation. Ethnic groups were in opposition, and eventually Prime Minister Trudeau announced the Multiculturalism Policy in 1971. In the wake of this announcement, multiculturalism was acknowledged and supported through various funding programs, history research projects, the repatriation of the Canadian Constitution, the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, and several provincial programs, departments, and bills. The chapter has shown how the Norwegian Canadian group benefitted from the movement towards multiculturalism, and how the ethnic group increased its activities and ethnic participation in Canadian society. Norwegian Canadians in Alberta received grants from the federal and provincial governments to enhance their cultural activities, and activities such as the Trollhaugen Language Arts & Culture Camp and the Valhalla Folk Dancers were initiated. However, this chapter has argued that the grants in themselves were not the sole reason why Norwegian Canadians experienced a boost. In fact, the grants disappeared with time, however, the activities did not. The acknowledgment of ethnic groups by different levels of government, further contributed to increased activity. Norwegian Canadians were members of multiculturalism conferences, committees and councils, provided a pavilion at the Heritage Days in Edmonton from its beginnings in 1973, established massive fundraising campaigns to maintain the Scandinavian B.A. Program at the University of Alberta, and held cultural displays in schools, shopping centres and museums around Alberta. The Multiculturalism Policy led to increased activity among Norwegian Canadians in western Canada, and this, in turn, led to a reformulation of their ethnic identity.



## Chapter Four: “Traditions Never Die”: The Reformulated Norwegian-Canadian Identity.

The increased ethnic activity that took place among Norwegian Canadians after the Multiculturalism Policy was initiated shows that their ethnic identity had undergone a transformation. This chapter, with a special focus on Norwegian Canadians in the Edmonton area, argues that Canadians of Norwegian descent reformulated an identity that can be traced back to the pioneer era. Although hallmarks of their ethnicity, such as language, were lost, they had kept enough Norwegian heritage to revive a sense of their ethnicity and commemorate their past. Canadian society was by the 1970s radically different from what it had been in the beginning of the century, and Herbert Gans has argued that the old ethnic culture that the immigrants brought with them no longer was needed by the third generation, thus ethnicity took on a more exotic form and became largely symbolic and a spare time activity.<sup>1</sup> The traditions Norwegian Canadians held on to had originated in western Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but were transformed to fit with a new reality. Most of the families who attended the annual functions in the 1970s-2000s did not speak Norwegian at home or practice Norwegian customs on a regular basis. The primary way of being ethnic for Norwegian Canadians was by “feeling ethnic.”<sup>2</sup> This chapter argues that although their identity was expressed largely through symbols, it was still vital to them. Norwegian Canadians had in fact not been completely assimilated. Instead, their ethnic identity had gone through a process of invention and reinvention, with help from the new political landscape in Canada. The first part of the chapter focuses on some of the activities that have been taking place in the Solglyt Lodge from the 1970s to the 2000s and how a reformulated ethnicity has been manifesting itself here. Then it goes on to discuss the way in which Norwegian Canadians have been portraying themselves to Canadian society, to show what they have thought of as specifically Norwegian. The last part of the chapter discusses how Norwegian Canadians perceive themselves today, in addition to arguing that although former Norwegian settlements do not highlight their Norwegian roots, there are still traces left which show that their Norwegian origins have shaped the way they portray themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> Gans, “Symbolic Ethnicity,” 432-435.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 434-435.

## ***Norwegian-Canadian Identity Reformulation through Activities in the Solglyt Lodge***

As shown in chapter three, Solglyt Lodge experienced increased activity with the introduction of the Multiculturalism Policy. Their focus was on lodge activities and various events and displays where Norwegian culture could be introduced to Canadian society. The Sons of Norway had since its beginning worked to maintain a Norwegian heritage in North America, however, as noted in chapter two, the organization arose as a necessity in the pioneer era where members relied on mutual help and contributions in order to adapt to their new homelands. By the 1960s and 1970s, most Norwegians in Canada were second or third generation, had little or no knowledge of the language, and thus they did not need their lodges as support in their daily lives. Instead, being members and celebrating their ethnic heritage was a choice. Yet, with the increased focus on multiculturalism in a number of spheres of Canadian society, the choice was strongly encouraged. When discussing a reformulation of ethnicity there are two main approaches to ethnicity we need to consider. The primordialist view (among others, the social anthropologist Clifford Geertz) argues that common descent is what determines ethnicity, thereby claiming that ethnicity is fixed and unchanging. The instrumentalist view (among others, the sociologist Orlando Patterson and social anthropologist Abner Cohen), on the other hand, argues that ethnicity is constantly changing because it is determined by how people define themselves. Thus, shared descent is secondary and can in fact be manipulated, making ethnicity adaptable and capable of changing form and meaning depending on the situation.<sup>3</sup> By the 1970s, the Sons of Norway had changed in terms of membership. Previously, members had been initiated on the basis of common heritage or affiliation by marriage, thus the way membership was determined fit with the primordialist view.<sup>4</sup> However, minutes of the Solglyt Lodge reveal that so-called “non-Norwegians” were welcomed into the lodge in the 1970s.<sup>5</sup> The majority of the members were still Norwegian either by birth, descent or marriage, but it is noteworthy that some joined because they had a fascination with Norwegian culture. The notion of what defined a Norwegian Canadian and the ethnic group seems to have been changing, which makes the instrumentalist view more valuable in this discussion. Kathleen Conzen et al. have argued that ethnicity is indeed

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<sup>3</sup> Aya Fujiwara, “Reconsiderations of Frameworks of Ethnic History: A Comparison of Métis and Ukrainian-Canadian Historiographies,” *Past Imperfect*, vol. 9 (2001-2003): 45-46; Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper, eds, *The Social Science Encyclopedia*, reprint (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 268-269.

<sup>4</sup> Dean Bennett, “Lodge is Ready to Mark its Anniversary,” *Neighbors*, May 8-14, 1988, 1, newspaper clipping retrieved from a file on Norwegians in Canada at the City of Edmonton Archives, March 9, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> See for example Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meetings, Edmonton, Canada, March 23, 1977 and February 7, 1979. On February 7, 1979, nine out of fourteen new members were “non-Norwegian,” retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

changing, and that “[e]thnic groups in modern settings are constantly recreating themselves, and ethnicity is continuously being reinvented in response to changing realities both within the group and the host society.”<sup>6</sup> This holds true for Norwegian Canadians as well, and their ethnic identity has been taking different forms in different situations. By exploring some of the activities and events members of the Solglyt Lodge have been organizing and participating in, we notice the reformulation of ethnic identity that has occurred.

In general, the activities hosted by the Solglyt Lodge have either been centred on the aspiration to learn more about one’s heritage and cultural roots, or by celebrating specific cultural events. The former has generally been taking place at the general meetings or in special language or arts classes.<sup>7</sup> With financial support, the lodge started language and folk-dancing classes, and from time to time special classes in *rosemaling*<sup>8</sup>, chip carving, and *Hardanger* embroidery have been held. In addition, it started a sewing club and a book club, and such activities are still taking place.<sup>9</sup> Most of these activities were brought over to Canada by the pioneers, which shows that members revived these skills in order to commemorate their heritage. The Sons of Norway organization was, and still is, concerned with the preservation of cultural skills. Members in all lodges could therefore attend classes and learn more about Norwegian arts and crafts and cooking, and be awarded with special cultural skills pins.<sup>10</sup> These pins have been highly appreciated by Solglyt members, and many members have been trying to collect them. Sometimes, a formal award ceremony at the general meeting followed when someone had completed a task which entitled them to a new pin.<sup>11</sup>

There are many ways in which members of Solglyt have learned more about their ethnic and cultural roots. General meetings have often featured cultural displays where members have brought artefacts from the areas of Norway where their ancestors came from. In some instances, the presenter wore a national costume, *bunad*, since it was distinct to the area that was being presented.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, films about Norway have been shown, and

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<sup>6</sup> Kathleen Conzen et al. “The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A.” *Journal of American Ethnic History*, vol. 12, no. 1 (Fall, 1992): 5.

<sup>7</sup> The general meeting was also an arena for discussing business matters and setting up committees for the activities that the lodge hosted.

<sup>8</sup> *Rosemaling* literally means “rose painting,” and is a decorative style of painting on wood, distinct to rural valleys of Norway in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

<sup>9</sup> See for example Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meeting, November 14, 2000; and “Husflid Nights, Monday May 31, June 28 – Folkdancing,” *Nyheter*, May-June, 2010, 8, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada..

<sup>10</sup> “Cultural Skills and Sports Medal Programs,” *Nyheter*, September-October, 2008, 9.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* 9, interview with Priscilla Kachmar, October 14, 2010, Edmonton, Canada, and personal participation at lodge meeting, October 12, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meeting, Edmonton, Canada January 5, 1981, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

guest speakers have been invited, either from Norway or members of other lodges. Some meetings have included the making and eating of ethnic foods, and the singing of Norwegian songs.<sup>13</sup> Newsletters published by the Scandinavian Centre from the late 1950s to the late 1980s contained articles pertaining to activities in all the Scandinavian groups, historical articles about the Scandinavian countries and their traditions, and some included Scandinavian recipes.<sup>14</sup> Members of Solglyt could therefore also learn more about their Norwegian heritage through this publication. In addition to this, the lodge started issuing its own newsletter, *Nyheter*, informing the members of Solglyt activities. The newsletter was still being issued in 2011, but it has generally only been available to members.<sup>15</sup> This suggests that although non-Norwegians have been welcomed, the group has been rather closed. However, this has been countered for by their website, which has enabled interested people to gain information about the organization, as well as visit and apply for membership.<sup>16</sup> Minutes from the year 2000 show that at least two new members found them by way of the internet.<sup>17</sup> The lodge members learned, and still learn, about their heritage through various activities, articles and displays, yet, the main focus has been on folkloric aspects of their culture.

That the folkloric components of the meetings have been important is evident, and in 1981, some members even complained that too much time was spent on business matters instead of on cultural content.<sup>18</sup> The culture that has been depicted is specific and can easily be expressed and celebrated by the members without any major changes to their daily lives. Whether or not they want to join special classes or even attend the general meetings has been voluntary, yet seldom has the interest been so small that the lodge has had to cancel its meetings or classes. Herbert Gans has noted that “[s]ymbolic ethnicity can be expressed in a myriad of ways, but above all [...] it is characterized by a nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country; a love for and a pride in a tradition that

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<sup>13</sup> See for example “Norway ‘In the Arts’,” *Scandinavian News*, vol. 19, no. 39, September 1984, 1 and 3-5; and Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meetings, Edmonton, Canada, April 11, 1989, March 12, 1991 and October 14, 1997, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada; and personal participation at general meeting October 12, 2010 and March 8, 2011.

<sup>14</sup> See for example *Scandinavian Centre News*, May, vol. 19, no. 21, 1981; and *Scandinavian News*, vol. 21, no. 5, October, 1986; Sigurd Arthur Sorenson, “Knud Holm-Pedersen Chosen as Manager of the Scandinavian News,” *Scandinavian News*, vol. 19, no. 35, January, 1984, 1; and “The News is Back?,” *Scandinavian News*, vol. 13, no. 1, February 1995, 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Nyheter*, March-April, 2011.

<sup>16</sup> Solglyt Lodge, accessed March 21, 2011, <http://www.sofnedmonton.ca/index.htm>.

<sup>17</sup> Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meeting, Edmonton, Canada, January 11, 2000, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>18</sup> Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meeting, Edmonton, Canada, April 17, 1995, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

can be felt without having to be incorporated into everyday behavior.”<sup>19</sup> This is certainly true for Canadians of Norwegian descent. The classes that have been held have generally revolved around arts and crafts that would amount to no more than a hobby, yet with an ethnic flair. Jean Burnet and Howard Palmer have noted that a number of ethnic groups in Canada have moved away from a functioning folk culture to a folkloric culture which “reflects only a museum culture.”<sup>20</sup> When the terms *symbolic ethnicity* and *museum culture* are ascribed to Norwegian Canadians it might be taken to mean that the group largely has been assimilated, and that the members have no true involvement or interest in their heritage. This, however, would underestimate the importance ethnicity plays in ethnic groups that no longer have a functioning culture. The sociologist Wsevolod Isajiw has noted that

Assimilation and retention of the ethnic identity are not necessarily contradictory, zero-sum processes, that is, that the more one assimilates, the less one retains identity, and vice versa, so that in the beginning or the end we have either one or the other. Rather assimilation and the retention of ethnic identity usually, for a long time and across generations, take place at the same time. Only the form of ethnic identity changes, especially from generation to generation. Ethnic identity is retained precisely through a process by which one form of ethnic identity gives way to another form.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, symbolic ethnicity should be considered a different form of ethnic identity, which serves an important function for Norwegian Canadians. Isajiw has also argued that because of the technological nature of modern culture, a number of people feel anonymous. Ethnic rediscovery is one way of creating an identity for oneself. This rediscovery does not have room for a total culture, but “it is a phenomenon of identification with selected ethnic cultural patterns.”<sup>22</sup> This further suggests that the symbolic nature of the Norwegian-Canadian identity has been created through a process shaped by changes in society. A great number of ethnic groups took, and are still taking, part in Heritage Festivals and similar organizations, and the notion of the assimilated Canadian was partly changed with the Multiculturalism Policy. Although Norwegian Canadians do not live in a functional Norwegian culture, it still holds great meaning to them. Their ethnicity has merely taken a new form, which underlines the instrumental nature of ethnicity. Where the pioneer generation had carried on traditions they were used to from home and adapted them to their Canadian life, later generations tended to separate such old traditions from Canadian variants to make them more authentic.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Gans, “Symbolic Ethnicity,” 436.

<sup>20</sup> Burnet and Palmer, “*Coming Canadians*,” 215.

<sup>21</sup> Isajiw, “Multiculturalism and Integration,” 110.

<sup>22</sup> Isajiw, “Olga in Wonderland,” 34-36.

<sup>23</sup> Burnet and Palmer, “*Coming Canadians*,” 215.

Cultural activities were now conducted in special classes, thereby separating them from their daily lives.<sup>24</sup> In this way they became symbolic expressions of their ethnicity.

### ***The Function of Special Events***

In addition to teaching members about their cultural roots, the Solglyt Lodge has been hosting special events where its heritage has been celebrated. Like the displays at general meetings and arts and crafts classes, some of these events have portrayed Norwegians as good craftsmen or they have celebrated their culinary traditions. One such event is the annual *Lutefisk* supper, where the number of participants generally has varied from between 100 and 200 people.<sup>25</sup> The event was celebrated in the late 1950s, but in the early 1980s it was no longer carried on. However, the tradition was revived in the late 1980s and the number of participants increased every year from 110 in 1990 to about 240 in 2011.<sup>26</sup> In fact, such *lutefisk* suppers were and are still held in many areas of Alberta. The small hamlet of Kingman is even dubbed the “Lutefisk Capital of Alberta,” which is advertised on a large sign, erected in 1991, welcoming visitors.<sup>27</sup> In Edmonton, members of the Solglyt Lodge and other interested parties, come together in January to eat *lutefisk* and other ethnic foods, such as *lefse*<sup>28</sup>, drink aquavit, and socialize. In addition, they sing a special *lutefisk* song, which makes fun of Norwegians’ taste in food and states that no one really likes *lutefisk*. The song underlines the supper’s ethnic function by subtly suggesting that only Norwegians would be stupid – or perhaps brave? – enough to eat something with such an awful smell, and by spelling words in the way they would be pronounced with a heavy Norwegian accent.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to *lutefisk* there are plenty of other types of food that the participants can enjoy at the *Lutefisk* supper, making it a great feast where not just *lutefisk*, but Norwegian cooking in general is celebrated. The modification of ethnic dishes is common among many

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<sup>24</sup> See for example Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meeting, Edmonton, Canada, November 8, 1978, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada; and “Scandinavian Cooking Class,” *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 11, no. 3, March, 1971, 4.

<sup>25</sup> See for example Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meetings, Edmonton, Canada, February 9, 1993, February 14, 1995, February 9, 1999, and February 8, 2000, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>26</sup> Solglyt Lodge, Report on Lutefisk Supper & Dance, January 21, 1995, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada and *Nyheter*, March-April, 2011, 9.

<sup>27</sup> The Scandinavian Trade and Cultural Society, *Scandinavian Connections: A Guide to Sites in Alberta* (Edmonton: Scandinavian Trade and Cultural Society, 2007), 168.

<sup>28</sup> Soft flatbread made from potatoes.

<sup>29</sup> The first verse goes as follows (sung to the tune of O’ Christmas Tree): “Lutefisk... O’ Lutefisk... how fragrant your aroma, O’ Lutefisk... O’ Lutefisk... You put me in a coma. You smell so strong... You look like glue, You taste yust like an overshoe. But Lutefisk... come Saturday, I tink I’ll eat you anyway!,” *Scandinavian Connections*, 169.

ethnic groups, especially when the food is enjoyed by the general public.<sup>30</sup> Members of the lodge have expressed that although they enjoy *lutefisk*, their children often do not, which could help explain why other foods are added to the *lutefisk* supper.<sup>31</sup> Many ethnic groups have not been able to maintain their dietary habits due to lack of ingredients or preparation time. This has contributed to ethnic foods becoming expressions of their symbolic ethnicity, since ethnic cuisine to a larger extent is enjoyed only on ceremonial occasions or in special restaurants.<sup>32</sup> This corresponds to Richard Alba's findings in his study in the Capital Region of New York State, which found that the eating of ethnic foods was decreasing among white Europeans in America, and it was most common to eat it on special occasions, like Christmas.<sup>33</sup> *Lutefisk* is traditionally served at Christmastime in certain areas of Norway. The annual *Lutefisk* supper, on the other hand, takes place in January and is not celebrated in relation to Christmas. This indicates that Norwegian Canadians differ slightly from Alba's findings. On the other hand, the *Lutefisk* supper has become a distinct tradition in its own right for the members of Solglyt since it is held in January every year. Because of this we can argue that it does correspond to Alba's findings, and that it underlines the symbolic function food has started to take in Norwegian Canadians' cuisine.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to the *Lutefisk* supper where ethnic food was, and still is, celebrated, other events that have been hosted can also be seen as examples of a reformulated Norwegian-Canadian identity. The Norwegian settlers portrayed Norwegians as strong Vikings and brave explorers, and events hosted by Solglyt in the 1970s and 1980s reflected such views as well. One main event was the Leif Erikson [sic.] Night. It commemorated Leiv Eiriksson's discovery of North America, and evidently combined both the Viking and the explorer image of Norwegians since Leiv Eiriksson was a Viking who discovered North America. This event is especially interesting because it is not a Norwegian tradition. Instead, it is a new-world invention, and it functioned as a specific symbol that was "visible and clear in meaning to large numbers of third-generation ethnics."<sup>35</sup> In 1981, over 100 members and guests celebrated Leif Erikson Night, which consisted of a nice supper, wine and entertainment. The facilities were decorated with a Viking ship display and Norwegian rugs, and Professor Christopher Hale told the saga of Leiv Eiriksson, which he, according to the *Scandinavian*

<sup>30</sup> Burnet and Palmer, "Coming Canadians," 215.

<sup>31</sup> Personal correspondence with members of the Solglyt Lodge, October 12, 2010 and March 8, 2011.

<sup>32</sup> Burnet and Palmer, "Coming Canadians," 215-216.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Alba, *Ethnic Identity*, 86-90. The Capital Region is "the core counties of the Albany-Schenectady-Troy metropolitan area." Alba, *Ethnic Identity*, 30.

<sup>34</sup> This holds true for, for example, the *Lutefisk* supper in Kingman as well, which is held on the first Friday of December annually. *Scandinavian Connections*, 168.

<sup>35</sup> Gans, "Symbolic Ethnicity," 436.

*Centre News* “explained with all the glorious details.”<sup>36</sup> His speech ensured that members and guests learned about this event and why it was commemorated, and the story of Leiv Eiriksson’s discovery was told in various ways throughout the years.<sup>37</sup> It is thus clear that Orm Øverland’s emphasis on the important function of founding myths in ethnic groups still held true among Norwegian Canadians in the 1980s.<sup>38</sup> Also, Eric Hobsbawm has argued that the invention of traditions takes place in a number of organizations. By invented traditions he means “a set of practices [...] which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.”<sup>39</sup> The annual celebration of Leif Erikson Day is an example of how Norwegian Canadians had invented an ethnic tradition. Solglyt made posters to advertise for the event, and they were even displayed at the Edmonton Heritage Festival. Thus, it seems like the lodge wanted other ethnic groups to attend the function as well, which suggests that the Multiculturalism Policy’s focus on sharing one’s culture with Canadian society had influenced Norwegian Canadians.

The celebration indicates that Leiv Eiriksson was a source of pride to Norwegian Canadians. The *Scandinavian Centre News* relates that “to this date Norwegians hold the undisputed honour-proven first to land on American soil.”<sup>40</sup> Not only was Leiv Eiriksson fearless and adventurous, but he was the rightful discoverer of North America. Norwegian immigrants to Canada in the early 1900s were proud of Leiv Eiriksson as well, and in 1930 they were pleased by the naming of a park in Saskatoon after him.<sup>41</sup> Conzen et al. have argued that Columbus Day served as a symbolic expression of Italian-Americans’ dual identity. The day emphasized that their Italian ancestors played an important function at the very beginning of American history, thereby legitimizing both their claim to Americanness and their pride in their Italianness.<sup>42</sup> There was no Leiv Eiriksson Day in Canada, yet we still see that Leiv Eiriksson’s discovery gave Norwegian Canadians the right to claim that they came first. This seems to have been important to many members of the lodge, and Sigurd Sorenson advocated that Canadians of Scandinavian descent should petition the government to proclaim October 9 Leiv Eiriksson Day in Canada, just like it had been declared in the United States. As early as

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<sup>36</sup> Christopher Hale is the Professor in the Scandinavian Program at the University of Alberta. “Solglyt Holds Leif Erikson Night,” *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 24, November 15, 1981, 5.

<sup>37</sup> See for example Solglyt Lodge, “Leif Erikson Nite – Oct. 14, 1989: Banquet and Dance,” Lodge Social Function Report 1989, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>38</sup> Øverland, “Hjemlandsmyter,” 146-148.

<sup>39</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, Introduction to *The Invention of Traditions*, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1.

<sup>40</sup> “Solglyt Holds Leif Erikson Night,” *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 24, November 15, 1981, 5.

<sup>41</sup> Gustav Hagen, “Saskatoon ærer nordmennene. Den første Leiv Erikson park i Canada,” *Vancouver Posten*, May 16, 1930.

<sup>42</sup> Conzen et al. “Invention of Ethnicity,” 28.



1958 he had been on a Leiv Eiriksson Committee devoted to this cause.<sup>43</sup> When compared to Italian Americans, we see that Norwegian Canadians were similar in that they also claimed that they had played an important function in early Canadian history, and that they should celebrate this event with pride. The celebration of Leiv Eiriksson served a dual function by teaching Norwegian Canadians about their Viking heritage and instilling in them a source of pride and special ownership to Canada.

Other important functions have been the Trollhaugen Language Arts and Culture Camp, and the *Syttende mai* celebrations. The Trollhaugen camp was, and still is, a week-long camp held in August, where Norwegian-Canadian families and other interested members have attended seminars in Norwegian cultural traditions, Norwegian language classes, eaten Norwegian food, and celebrated Norwegian holidays. Sports have also been an important aspect of the camp. Every camp has been organized around a set theme, and voluntary classes in *rosemaling*, chip carving and *Hardanger* embroidery, as well as mandatory language and folk-dancing classes have been taught in conjunction with this theme.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, Norwegian holidays have usually been celebrated, giving members the opportunity to experience these occasions.<sup>45</sup> This could possibly have resulted in larger turnouts at functions such as the *Syttende mai* celebrations and the annual Christmas party. In combination with the classes and celebrations, the participants have been taught aspects of Norwegian political, social and cultural history, however, the teaching of languages and crafts seems to have been the most essential.<sup>46</sup> In some years, the themes narrowed down the focus of the camp, which ensured that the participants were not overwhelmed with information. Some themes even “created new interest, respect and national pride in Norway,” suggesting that a narrow focus was essential to instil such a pride.<sup>47</sup> Not only does this indicate that the camp served, and still serves, an important function in keeping a Norwegian-Canadian identity alive, but it shows that although Norwegian traditions were not part of their everyday lives, there was still enough interest to hold a week-long camp every year.

The classes have been good arenas for teaching Canadians of Norwegian descent some aspects of Norwegian culture, although the culture that has been taught has to a larger extent represented the culture Norwegian immigrants brought with them to Canada in the early

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<sup>43</sup> Sorenson, *My Memoirs*, 206 and 236.

<sup>44</sup> See for example Astrid Hope, “Trollhaugen Salutes Famous Norsemen,” *Scandinavian News*, vol. 22, no. 1, February, 1987, 10.

<sup>45</sup> Beatrice Daily Huser, *Trollhaugen Trove*, 2-3.

<sup>46</sup> The *Scandinavian News* for example relates that “[...] most importantly, language classes and crafts went on regularly every day.” Astrid Hope, “Trollhaugen Salutes Famous Norsemen,” *Scandinavian News*, vol. 22, no. 1, February, 1987, 10.

<sup>47</sup> Astrid Hope, “Norway ‘In the Arts’,” *Scandinavian News*, vol. 19, no. 39, September, 1984, 1-5.

twentieth century than a living, contemporary Norwegian culture. In order to preserve Norwegian culture in Canada, which has been one of the main objectives of the camp, it has been vital to make younger generations interested.<sup>48</sup> Although the Multiculturalism Policy contributed to an ethnic resurgence in the lodge, it has been noted that younger members have not been as interested. Minutes from general meetings show that the lodge sometimes put emphasis on the number of children who had signed up, and Solglyt's newsletter stated that "[t]his [Trollhaugen] is a great opportunity for children who *should* (emphasis added) learn something of their cultural and linguistic heritage under the care and guidance of excellent instructors." Without passing the cultural knowledge and skills on to their children the group would with time disappear. The number of attendants, which has been steadily rising since the first camp in 1973, shows that they have been somewhat successful. Yet, the fear demonstrates that although their culture no longer is a functional culture, some Canadians of Norwegian descent in the post-Multiculturalism era have also been concerned with passing their culture on to their children, like Norwegian immigrants were in the settlement period.<sup>49</sup>

This fear has to some extent been well-founded. Although the lodge and its members became more active, later generations have been less interested than the older generations. It could be argued that ethnicity in Canada eventually will fade and disappear altogether, since later generations identify less with their ethnic background. For instance, a study carried out in north-central Saskatchewan in 1969-71 showed that the number of Scandinavians who did not favour identity preservation was steadily increasing from the first through the second and third generation.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, a study in large prairie cities in 1980 found that ethnic identification was not as salient in later generations as it was for their parents, and that there was an increasing tendency to identify with being simply Canadian in Edmonton and Calgary.<sup>51</sup> In 1993, a study found that Scandinavians, in addition to Germans, Ukrainians, Poles and British, less actively supported their in-group cultures.<sup>52</sup> High intermarriage rates

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<sup>48</sup> Two main objectives were "to promote and preserve Norwegian culture and heritage in North America" and "to support, assist and promote education and research of Norwegian language, culture, ethnic and social values and system and generally to encourage, foster and develop awareness of the heritage contribution of the Norwegian emigrants to Canadian and North American life." Trollhaugen Language Arts and Cultural Society, Notice to the Office of the Registrar of Corporations, November 5, 1989, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>49</sup> Huser, *Trollhaugen Trove*, 2 and "Trollhaugen Culture and Language Camp," *Nyheter*, October, 1995, 2.

<sup>50</sup> The study was carried out in eighteen ethno-religious bloc settlements, where all Hutterites favoured identity preservation, whereas Doukhobors, Ukrainian Catholics, Ukrainian Orthodox, Mennonites, Scandinavians, French and German Catholics all showed a steady increase in the proportion not favouring identity preservation. See Burnet and Palmer, "*Coming Canadians*," 220.

<sup>51</sup> Leo Driedger, *Race and Ethnicity: Finding Identities and Equalities*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2003), 137.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

could obviously also add to the lack of identification, since it no longer would be evident with which culture one should identify.<sup>53</sup> Yet, Gans has argued that ethnic organizations which deal mainly in symbols will persist, since symbolic ethnicity will be the most salient form of ethnicity by the fourth generation. He uses the example of Scandinavians, among others, in America as evidence of this.<sup>54</sup> Based on this evidence, then, it is likely that Norwegian culture in Canada will be maintained since the Norwegian-Canadian identity largely has become symbolic as well. It is, however, understandable that Solglyt has been pleased with high attendance at its family events, and that another objective of the Trollhaugen society has been “to promote and encourage family participation.”<sup>55</sup>

In addition to teaching families and other interested parties about Norway and specific traditions, in some years Trollhaugen has been focusing on the Norwegians who settled in Canada. In 1980, it was noted that the participants “were proud to learn of [their] heritage and give [...] tribute to [their] forefathers.”<sup>56</sup> It was argued that they were proud since their forefathers “became farmers, fishermen, lumberjacks and mill workers, commanding respect for their integrity, patience, thrift and perseverance” and “brought with them customs and traditions, and such things as Hardanger [embroidery], knitting, rosemaling and woodcraft.”<sup>57</sup> The crafts themselves, then, were directly connected to the pioneers, since they brought them over from Norway. In 1979, “[they] tried to pass on a few of the pioneer arts and crafts which had their beginnings many, many generations ago.”<sup>58</sup> At the front of the building they set up “[a] special table of ‘nostalgi’” – nostalgia – which displayed numerous artefacts from the pioneer era.<sup>59</sup> This clearly shows the importance the pioneer era played in their reformulated ethnic identity. The pioneer period was highly romanticized; it was pronounced that at camp they went back in time to “when people were ingenious and skillful [sic].”<sup>60</sup> Frances Swyripa has argued that words such as *perseverance*, *endurance*, *religiosity*, *humility*, *lawfulness* and *thrift* were used by settler peoples on the prairies to describe their immigrant ancestors. These

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<sup>53</sup> Alba, *Ethnic Identity*, 50-51.

<sup>54</sup> They immigrated to the United States in the middle to late decades of the nineteenth century, but although they are acculturated to a large extent and part of the American mainstream, they are still very concerned with their heritage. Gans, “Symbolic Ethnicity,” 445-448.

<sup>55</sup> Trollhaugen Language Arts and Culture Society, Notice to the Office of the Registrar of Corporations, November 5, 1989, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>56</sup> Astrid Hope, “Trollhaugen Cruise Line: Cruising for Culture,” *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 15, October, 1980, 4-5

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>58</sup> Astrid Hope, “Ide [sic.] gamle dager: Trollhaugen ’79,” *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 4, September 28, 1979, 5

<sup>59</sup> The table was draped in a hundred year old hand-spun woven linen cloth, and among the items that could be found on it were an old-time mangle, butter forms, spinning wheel with carter, a miniature log cabin with furnishings, homemade soap with a washboard and an old Bible. *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

descriptions were, according to her, “the only ones readily available to groups whose primary contribution to Canadian nation building entailed hard physical labour.”<sup>61</sup> With time all these ethnic groups came to see these traits as their own, which made them perceive themselves as especially suited to farming in western Canada.<sup>62</sup> In chapter two it was noted how Norwegian settlers to Canada did see such qualities as specifically Norwegian. It is therefore noteworthy that such words were still being used to describe Norwegians in 1979-80. The main difference was that the traits were now embodied in the immigrants themselves, the forefathers of the participants at camp, which gave the participants in the Trollhaugen Camp an extra reason to be proud of their Norwegian-Canadian ancestry, learn more and celebrate their heritage publicly.

The annual *Syttende mai* celebration is another important family event which has been thought of as an important arena in which to maintain Norwegian culture in Canada. “Our children are our future,” related the *Scandinavian Centre News* in 1979,

[...] and special attention should be given to instilling in them a right sense of direction. Let us keep our heritage alive and make certain that our children and the generations of the future will know their roots and the culture of their forefathers. There is a Norwegian saying: *Stor arv det er for mannen as [sic.] godt folk vera food [sic.]* – it is a great heritage to be born of good people.<sup>63</sup>

This statement could be seen as an example of what Benedict Anderson calls “imagined communities;” the idea that nationalism and national feelings arise by feeling connected to people one has never met.<sup>64</sup> This “great heritage” was to be introduced to Canadian children of Norwegian descent through, among other things, their involvement in the flag-raising ceremony and following parade. Norwegian displays and pictures of past celebrations, celebrations in Norway, and from the language camp, were shown. In addition, a great number of children’s games, such as relays, egg and bag races and tug-o-war, were played during the afternoon.<sup>65</sup> All the activities further contributed to a sense of pride in their Norwegian roots. *Syttende mai* is often referred to as “barnas dag” – “the children’s day” – in Norway, thus this tradition has been an excellent way of instilling ethnic pride among the children in Canada.<sup>66</sup> That the *Syttende mai* tradition has been deemed vital to the

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<sup>61</sup> Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes*, 121.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>63</sup> Astrid Hope, “Special Recognition,” *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 4, May, June, July, 1979, 10.

<sup>64</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 6.

<sup>65</sup> Bob Burt, “Syttende mai ’80,” *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 12, June, 1980, 1.

<sup>66</sup> The central element of the celebrations in all parts of Norway is children’s parades, *barnetog*, with flags and marching bands.

maintenance of Norwegian culture in Canada is further suggested by an advertisement for the *Syttende mai* banquet in the *Scandinavian Centre News* in 1981. It featured a drawing of *Syttende mai* celebrations in Oslo, Norway, which was given the captioning “Traditions Never Die.”<sup>67</sup> By this, the advertisement implied that *Syttende mai* had become an established institution, not only in Norway, but also among Norwegians in Canada.

Furthermore, *Syttende mai* has been a public celebration of so-called Norwegian values, such as love of freedom and democracy. As seen, these values were held high by the pioneers as well. In 1966, Sigurd Sorenson held an address at the *Syttende mai* banquet where he stated that:

[...] the word *Norway* stirs something within me deeper than mere geography. The suffering and sacrifice of our forefathers for freedom flashes into my mind with every mention of the word *Norway*. Through all the ups and downs – rise and fall – rise again – in Norwegian history; there is a line through it all – dim at times – but always there – the line – of democracy and the love of freedom. [...] I want you to be proud with me of Norway’s traditional love of freedom and independence and finally let’s resolve to leave the world a better place to live when we leave, than what it was when we came. Let’s all be freedom-fighters, as were the Men of Eidsvold.<sup>68</sup> Democracy has flourished, and with freedom has come a sense of well-being, of security, never known before. This is our heritage and it is our duty to contribute to an emerging Canadian culture all we can within our ability to preserve a democratic way of life.<sup>69</sup>

Sorenson’s speech underlines the significance the values of freedom and democracy have played for Norwegian Canadians. In addition to honouring these values, Sorenson seemed to believe that Norwegian Canadians had a duty to preserve these values in Canadian society. This suggests that later-generation Norwegian Canadians, like their pioneer forefathers, believed people of Norwegian ancestry to be notable proponents of such values, and that these values were important Norwegian contributions to Canada. The *Syttende mai* flag-raising and parade has drawn crowds from different organizations, and it is an event where Canadians of Norwegian descent have been especially visible in the Canadian mosaic, thereby providing a good opportunity to, in Sorenson’s words, contribute their heritage “to an emerging Canadian culture.”<sup>70</sup>

In order to contribute to Canadian culture, an official recognition of the day has been imperative. May 17, 1973 marked an important day for the Canadians of Norwegian descent in Edmonton. For the first time, the Norwegian flag was raised at City Hall in honour of the

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<sup>67</sup> Advertisement for the *Syttende mai* banquet, *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 20, April 15, 1981, 10.

<sup>68</sup> The Norwegian Constitution was signed in Eidsvold (today: Eidsvoll), a municipality in eastern Norway, north of the capital, Oslo.

<sup>69</sup> Sorenson, *My Memoirs*, 194.

<sup>70</sup> Letter from Beatrice Huser, secretary of Solglyt Lodge, to Orla Holm, president of the Nordic Society, April 2, 1980, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

Norwegian Independence Day, and Mayor Ivor Dent presided over the ceremony.<sup>71</sup> The flag-raising has been held annually after this, and the Mayor, in addition to the Norwegian Consul and Ambassador, have always been invited.<sup>72</sup> In fact, in 1980 the lodge sent a letter to Mayor Cec Purves saying that “[w]e would be honored if your office would make the necessary arrangements to have yourself or your Deputy officiate at the ceremony, and proclaim May 17<sup>th</sup> as National Norwegian Day.”<sup>73</sup> This underlines the importance *Syttende mai* has had for some Norwegian Canadians. Not only did they want to celebrate it in their lodge, but they wanted acknowledgment from Canadian society. In fact, the most vital function the flag-raising ceremony had seems to have been the acknowledgment of their culture. It was noted that

[a]nother Syttende Mai has made history at City Hall! A record crowd turned out (around 150) on an equally record warm day to hear Mayor Cec Purves declare the proclamation and to raise the majestic red, white and blue Norwegian flag to the same alignment as our own Canadian flag. What an honour!<sup>74</sup>

It seems, then, that the Mayor did in fact proclaim May 17 as National Norwegian Day. It seems reasonable to think that this came as a result of the new public recognition of different ethnic cultures that the Multiculturalism Policy established. It is also noteworthy that the participants identified with the Canadian, not the Norwegian, flag as their own, which also implies that their ethnic identity had become more symbolic than functional. The honour seems to have been connected to the acknowledgment itself. On that one day, the flags of Norway and Canada were raised to the same alignment, emphasizing the importance Norwegian contributions had had in Canadian society. Although Norwegian Canadians did not ask for any special support or protection from the government during the implementation of the Multiculturalism Policy, it is obvious that an official acknowledgment of their culture was still of great value to them.

The celebration of *Syttende mai* has especially indicated the presence of a distinct Norwegian-Canadian identity. As mentioned above, it has been important to have a prominent Canadian public figure present at the event. In addition to this, in some years it seems as if it

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<sup>71</sup> History of Solglyt Lodge, received from Kenneth Domier on March 9, 2011.

<sup>72</sup> In 1987, the flag-raising was cancelled, but the members were urged to participate in the flag-raising and supper in Camrose instead. Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meeting, May 4, 1987, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada; and email correspondence with Kenneth Domier, May 5, 2011.

<sup>73</sup> Letter from the Solglyt Lodge to Mayor Cec Purves, February 16, 1980, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>74</sup> Astrid Hope, “Cultural Corner,” *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 12, June 1980, 2.

was significant to have other Canadians present as well, if only just as bystanders.<sup>75</sup> The raising of the Norwegian flag next to the Canadian one seems to have been imperative, both the Canadian and Norwegian national anthems have been played, and the participants have also brought with them both Norwegian and Canadian flags.<sup>76</sup> The incorporation of the Canadian flag is especially interesting since the introduction of foreign flags in the children's parades in Norway for many years has been a rather contentious issue. Although the values of freedom and democracy have been important aspects of the Norwegian celebration as well, the celebration is first and foremost thought of as a celebration of Norwegian independence.<sup>77</sup> In Canada, on the other hand, the celebration cannot be celebrated with an exclusive focus on Norway since the participants identify strongly with Canada as well. Therefore, it seems to have become more focused on the values and their importance for Canadian society. This shows that the tradition has been reinvented and affected by the new-world setting, like Conzen et al. have argued.<sup>78</sup> The celebration had become, and still is, an expression of their Norwegian-Canadian ethnicity.<sup>79</sup>

The adaptation of Norwegian customs to the Canadian reality is even more striking when one looks at speeches held at some *Syttende mai* banquets. In some years, for instance, not only the signing of the Constitution in 1848, but also the end of the union with Sweden in 1905 was celebrated as a sign of Norway's true independence. However, it was duly noted that "[...] today we join in celebrating not only one divorce resulting in freedom from Danish rule, but we also celebrate the divorce between Norway and Sweden in the very year when we celebrate a birth – the birth of Alberta as a Province."<sup>80</sup> This link was further celebrated in 2005, when a committee was formed to celebrate a joint 100 year anniversary for Norwegian independence and Alberta's provincial status.<sup>81</sup> In 1982, another speech "encouraged the

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<sup>75</sup> In 1980, for instance, there was a radio announcement about the ceremony that allegedly "brought out a good number more to watch the colourful pageant." Burt, "Syttende mai '80," 1.

<sup>76</sup> For instance, the *Scandinavian Centre News* noted that in 1979 "[t]he red, white and blue Norwegian flag flew majestically on the arm below the Canadian flag for the rest of the day. Strains of Norwegian music [...] continued to fill the air, emphasizing the happy spirit of this meaningful day." Astrid Hope, "Syttende Mai – 1979," *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 4, May, June, July, 1979, 8.

<sup>77</sup> The Sami flag and the United Nations flag are allowed, however. For articles about the flag debate, see for example "Flagg-strid i Volda foran 17. mai," *Aftenposten*, May 12, 2005, accessed April 15, 2011, <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article1038060.ece>; and "Sier nei til utenlandske flagg i 17.mai-toget i Oslo," *Aftenposten*, April 8, 2008, accessed April 15, 2011, <http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2355162.ece>.

<sup>78</sup> Conzen et al., "Invention of Ethnicity," 5.

<sup>79</sup> Conzen et. al. have argued that the Italian American tradition the *festa* was affected by the new-world setting and "became over time itself an expression of an emerging Italian-American identity." The same patterns can be seen in the celebration of *Syttende mai*. *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>80</sup> Janette Burt, speech given at the 1980 Flag-Raising Ceremony, May 17, 1980, as quoted in Burt, "Syttende mai '80," 1.

<sup>81</sup> Solglyt Lodge, 2005 Scrapbook, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

celebration of the occasion – the Anniversary of Independence” and “pointed out that it was just a month to the day that Canada was presented their ‘constitution’, following many years of independence.”<sup>82</sup> In this way, the *Syttende mai* celebrations have been given increased significance for Norwegian Canadians. The freedom and independence Norwegians had fought for became symbols of the birth of Alberta and the repatriation of the Canadian constitution. This clearly indicates that the Norwegian-Canadian ethnic identity was, and still is, strong, but also that it had been adapted to fit with their Canadian reality. Norwegian traditions had increasingly become symbols with which Canadians could choose to identify or not, and the symbols were given increased meaning by connecting them to important Canadian events.

Although they have identified more strongly with Canada, it is clear that the Norwegian heritage still has held great importance to them. This is evident from the focus on keeping their heritage alive, and their efforts to instil ethnic pride in their children. All Scandinavian groups seem to have been afraid of their cultures dying out. After the Scandinavian Centre was sold in 1981, they experienced some years of low member turnout, but the Scandinavian Centre Co-Op was still active, trying to ensure shareholders and money to build another centre.<sup>83</sup> In 1995 they stated that

[w]e have lost over 13 years while other ethnic groups have surged ahead building facilities in which to congregate and socialize. Our children are becoming less enchanted and are drifting away from the theme of multiculturalism and into a unifying Canadian mosaic. Unless we provide suitable facilities and activities for our children and our children’s children we, as cultural entities, will disintegrate in face of the changing mores of society.<sup>84</sup>

This statement is not only interesting because of its worry over the lack of interest among younger Scandinavian Canadians, but because it shows that the Scandinavian ethnic leaders pictured a duality between multiculturalism on the one hand and a “unifying Canadian mosaic” on the other. This underlines the influence the multiculturalism movement has had on the Scandinavian groups, and the importance of identifying with more than just one’s Canadian background. Without any knowledge of their Scandinavian culture, the ethnic

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<sup>82</sup> Bob Burt, “Flag-Raising Celebration,” *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 30, June 15, 1982, 4.

<sup>83</sup> The Scandinavian Centre Co-Op indicate that the Scandinavian Centre had to be sold due to government expropriation. See “The Scandinavian Centre,” pamphlet with information about the building of the new Scandinavian Centre, 4. Unknown publication date, but most likely 1994 or 1995, since the pamphlet was filed together with minutes from 1994 and 1995 concerning the building of a new centre, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada. Sigurd Sorenson, however, argued in his memoirs that they had to close down because of gross financial mismanagement. See Sorenson, *My Memoirs*, 144.

<sup>84</sup> Scandinavian Centre Co-Operative Ltd, Invitation to Annual Shareholders Meeting, February 13, 1995, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.



groups would in fact disintegrate. The intentions behind building the centre suggest that the Scandinavian groups wanted to avoid disintegration by focussing on education and cultural activities, but they were also intent on publically acclaiming their heritage; a heritage they were grateful for and proud of.<sup>85</sup> Through co-operation between all the Scandinavian groups this could be more easily achieved, and they could “[m]ake a greater contribution to Canadian culture of that which is good in the Scandinavian heritage.”<sup>86</sup> This made it essential not only to teach their children, but also share their heritage and inform other Canadians of their cultural roots. The new centre would cater to everyone, and it was imperative that some form of interchange with other Canadians took place. The President remarked that Scandinavian countries for a long time had been leaders, and his final remark at a special meeting in the Scandinavian Centre Co-Op emphasized, perhaps more than anything else, the faith that was put in the Scandinavian heritage: “I see Scandinavians as the people [who] are capable of leading society into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”<sup>87</sup> In order to influence society, one had to be visible in the multicultural Canadian mosaic.

### ***The Portrayal of Norwegian Culture in Canadian Society***

The portrayal of Norwegian culture to other Canadians has not deviated much from the way in which it has been portrayed within the lodge. Tangible, symbolic aspects of the ethnic culture have been common, which means that arts and crafts, in combination with folk-dancing, folk music and ethnic cooking have been popular. Minutes of meetings in the Solglyt Lodge show that members on a number of occasions organized cultural displays in places ranging from schools and museums to shopping centres and on television. Here they could meet other Canadians or teach Canadians of Norwegian descent more about their heritage. In 1980, the Multi-Cultural Resources Committee of the Edmonton Public Schools asked Solglyt if any members of their lodge would like to be called upon to act as resource personnel for elementary schools. They noted that “[y]our group could be of great benefit in presenting to students background information, explanations, or audio-visual presentations on their ethnic area.”<sup>88</sup> This underlines how the perceptions of ethnic identity had changed in Canada in the last decades. Becoming familiar with one’s ethnic background was now deemed important for

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<sup>85</sup> “The Scandinavian Centre,” pamphlet, 1.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>87</sup> Letter from Louis J. Broten, president of the Scandinavian Centre Co-Operative Association Ltd., to officers and members of the Scandinavian societies in Edmonton, September 1, 1994. and Scandinavian Centre Co-Operative Association Ltd., Minutes of Special Meeting, Edmonton, Canada, September 26, 1994, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>88</sup> N. G. Spillics, Letter to Gary Johnson, president of the Solglyt Lodge, 1980, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

students' understanding, and ethnic groups were called upon to be resource personnel. It is reasonable to assume that this came as a direct result of the Multiculturalism Policy. Three members signed up for it, which shows that some Norwegian Canadians were anxious to take part in such a project. This further suggests that they too had been influenced by the policy, and were honoured to be able to share their culture with students.

In fact, members of the Solglyt Lodge had provided schools with displays and demonstrations for years before they received the letter from the Edmonton Public Schools. One member was especially active, and she usually visited seven or eight schools a year because she wanted to introduce others to Norwegian customs.<sup>89</sup> Thus, the new official acceptance of ethnic cultures had affected Norwegian Canadians even before they were asked by the Edmonton Public Schools themselves. In general, the school visits involved a cultural display where Norwegian artefacts, handicrafts and folk music were central elements. In addition, traditions were often also demonstrated and taught.<sup>90</sup> In this way, other Canadians could gain a greater understanding of the Norwegian culture and see that it was an important element in the Canadian mosaic. This finding further shows that they wanted to portray Norwegian Canadians as artistic, and this was also achieved with even more elaborate displays held outside of schools.<sup>91</sup> What they chose to display were aspects of a Norwegian culture which Burnet and Palmer refer to as a museum culture, meaning that Canadian variants were weeded out "in favour of old country forms."<sup>92</sup>

The government-sponsored film *Norwegian Heritage in Alberta* also bears witness to a wish to portray Norwegian culture as a culture in which traditional arts and crafts, folk music and folk dancing are essential components.<sup>93</sup> The film was originally intended to be played at the provincial museum, but it has also been shown to members of the lodge on some

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<sup>89</sup> See for example "She Promotes Ethnic Culture," unknown publication, June 10, 1977, newspaper clipping accessed from a file on Norwegians in Canada at the City of Edmonton Archives, March 9, 2011; and Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meetings, Edmonton, Canada, January, 1973, February 13, 1980, October 8, 1980, April 12, 1994, and March 12, 1996, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>90</sup> See for example Astrid Hope, "Cultural Corner" *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 8, February, 1980, 6; Astrid Hope, "Cultural Corner," *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 11, May, 1980, 6; Astrid Hope, "Cultural Corner," *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 22, June 15, 1981, 6; and Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meetings, Edmonton, Canada, December 8, 1977, December 7, 1979 and November 30, 1985, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>91</sup> See for example Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meeting, Edmonton, Canada, November 30, 1985, December 12, 1989, November 19, 1992, January 12, 1994, January 10, 1995 and January 9, 1996, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>92</sup> Burnet and Palmer, "Coming Canadians," 215.

<sup>93</sup> "Norwegian Heritage in Alberta," *The Alberta Cultural Heritage Film Series*, a project initiated by the Honourable Horst A. Schmid [sic.], a Kurt Wolf Palka Production, 1978, copy received from Kenneth Domier on March 8, 2011.

occasions.<sup>94</sup> However, it does not seem like the film has been circulated much, thus its function must not be overstated. Still, it does illustrate how Norwegian Canadians wanted to portray themselves to outsiders. Interestingly, it emphasizes that Norwegians were the first Europeans to land in Canada, and also explains how Norwegian pioneers had helped shape the Albertan landscape. Their achievements in the establishment and the thriving of local communities are used as evidence of the important Norwegian presence in Alberta. Furthermore, it is noted that they were deemed desirable newcomers due to their “hardiness and skills.”<sup>95</sup> There is no doubt that the film makers were proud of their heritage, and that they wanted other Canadians to understand why.

The film also argues that Norwegian Canadians, at the time of filming, still took part in a vibrant and active community life, although some were worried about the future of the lodge. It is explained that a high percentage of Norwegian Canadians attend social events, but since immigration from Norway to Canada basically has come to a standstill, the continuation of their heritage is of great concern to them. The film also emphasizes the fear that adolescents were disinterested in their roots. Nevertheless, it is noted that young people do take part in the Trollhaugen Camp and “there is little sign of rejection among [them],” since they “have an uncanny sense of healthy balance.”<sup>96</sup> By this it is meant that “they accept what they like and what they find useful and good, and if the blend consists of the best of the Norwegian heritage, of Canada’s present and future, mixed with a dash of foreign languages and a fun-filled summer at Pigeon Lake, so much the better.”<sup>97</sup> The film, then, portrays the blending of Norwegian and Canadian cultures as the most beneficial, and perhaps the most important heritage one could pass on to one’s children. The film portrays an ethnic group which in the 1970s was interested in retaining its heritage and sharing it with Canada, yet understood that in order to do so it had to make its activities meaningful for everyone.

One activity which has been attracting young and old Canadians of various ethnic backgrounds is the Birkebeiner Ski Festival. This event exemplifies the influence Norwegian Canadians have had on skiing in Canada. It was started in 1985 by a small group of avid ski enthusiasts in the Edmonton area, spearheaded by the Norwegian-born Ole Hovind, and was intended to be a family event. It has been an annual event ever since, weather permitting, and is “[a] premier, affordable, family-oriented, friendly cross-country ski loppet (recreational

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<sup>94</sup> See for example Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meeting, Edmonton, Canada, May 24, 1978, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada; and Astrid Hope, “Ide [sic.] gamle dager: Trollhaugen ’79,” *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 4, September 28, 1979, 5.

<sup>95</sup> “Norwegian Heritage in Alberta.”

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> The Trollhaugen Camp took place at Pigeon Lake. “Norwegian Heritage in Alberta.”

event) honouring the spirit of the Norwegian Birkebeiner legend.”<sup>98</sup> The race is a Canadian version of the Norwegian Birkebeiner, which started in 1932, and the Canadian founders got the idea from participating in the Norwegian race in 1983. Thus, the founding of the Canadian equivalent was connected to the instructors’ Norwegian heritage.<sup>99</sup> The members of Solglyt have also been active from the ski festival’s beginning, through for instance assisting in organizing the event and by serving refreshments to the contestants after the race. Cultural displays have also been organized, and they seem to have been well received. The opening ceremonies have usually featured a parade of flags and a re-enactment of the Birkebeiner legend.<sup>100</sup> This shows that the Norwegian tradition have been adapted to Canadian circumstances. Just like at the *Syttende mai* celebrations, Norwegian and Canadian flags have been part of the parade, emphasizing the link between Norwegian culture and the Canadian festival.

From its beginnings with 127 racers, the ski festival has grown and become Canada’s largest classical-format cross country skiing race. More than 1500 skiers participate annually, and the highest number of participants has reached almost 2500.<sup>101</sup> In this way, Norwegian Canadian culture has been shared with Canadian society at large, and it is evident that members of Solglyt have been proud of this.<sup>102</sup> In chapter two it was noted that Norwegian immigrants brought cross-country skiing to Canada, and that they organized ski clubs in many places in western Canada. The founding of the Canadian Birkebeiner shows that skiing still was important to Canadians of Norwegian descent in the 1980s. In fact, Sons of Norway lodges in Alberta have since 1973 competed against each other in their annual Canadian Winter Games.<sup>103</sup> Also, the Solglyt Lodge and affiliated groups, such as *Torskeklubben*, have been the main financial sponsors of the Birkebeiner, and minutes of meetings point out that

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<sup>98</sup> “What is the Canadian Birkebeiner Ski Festival?” accessed April 7, 2011, <http://www.canadianbirkie.com/event-details>, For more information on The Birkebeiner Legend, see “Birkie Legend,” accessed April 7, 2011, <http://www.canadianbirkie.com/birkie-legend>.

<sup>99</sup> “Birkebeinerrennet – historie,” accessed April 7, 2011, <http://www.birkebeiner.no/Historien/Birkebeinerrennet/>; and Ole Hovind Award,” accessed April 7, 2011, <http://www.canadianbirkie.com/special-awards>.

<sup>100</sup> See Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meetings, Edmonton, Canada, January 13, 1986, February 2, 1987 and February 11, 1997, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>101</sup> Information received by email correspondence with the general manager of the Birkebeiner Festival, Glenda Hanna, April 13, 2011. Also, see Canadian Birkebeiner, “What is the Canadian Birkebeiner Ski Festival?” accessed April 14, 2011, <http://www.canadianbirkie.com/event-details>.

<sup>102</sup> Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meeting, Edmonton, Canada, February 19, 1990, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>103</sup> Bob Burt, “Winter Games Success,” *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 20, April 15, 1981, 11.

“Norwegians did really well in the Birkebeiner race.”<sup>104</sup> The connection between the Canadian Birkebeiner and Norwegians is also emphasized in one of the awards of merit that is handed out; The Ole Hovind award.<sup>105</sup> The website states that “[b]eing Norwegian helps but is not mandatory” to win, which suggests that being of Norwegian ancestry is an advantage because it makes one a better skier. This event which was initiated and sponsored by Norwegian Canadians is far-reaching, and it has also connected Norwegian Canadians to their ancestor’s homeland since the event is modelled on a Norwegian race. As such the event has been serving as a great promoter of Norwegian culture in Alberta.

In Alberta, Heritage Days has perhaps been the most important arena where Norwegian culture can be shared with others. This festival has provided an arena for large elaborate displays with visitors numbering as many as 350,000 people.<sup>106</sup> However, it is not just Norwegian culture which has been displayed; all the members of the Scandinavian Centre Co-Op have joined together for a display at this festival, which takes place in Edmonton. The project has been taken very seriously, and seems to have been of especially great interest to the Norwegian-Canadian group. This is for instance clear from their involvement in the Scandinavian Heritage Society, which since 1984 has been planning and organizing the Heritage Days display. In fact, in sixteen out of the twenty-seven years since its foundation, members of the Sons of Norway have served as presidents of the society.<sup>107</sup> Also, the planning of the event has often started early. In some years they started asking for volunteers already in September; only one month after the festival was over.<sup>108</sup> From minutes of meetings, it seems like cultural displays in schools and museums are no longer held by the Solglyt Lodge in the twenty-first century. Heritage Days has become “the only occasion when Scandinavians can demonstrate their contribution to the Canadian mosaic.”<sup>109</sup> In light of this it is understandable that Solglyt has been putting so much effort into the pavilion, even though it is not only a Norwegian display.

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<sup>104</sup> Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meeting, Edmonton, Canada, February 19, 1990, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada; and information about sponsorship received by email correspondence with the general manager of the Birkebeiner Festival, Glenda Hanna, April 13, 2011.

<sup>105</sup> It is presented “annually to the skier who best represents the spirit of the Birkebeiner and the things which Ole valued – skiing for the sheer joy of it, having fun, joking a lot, achieving something and just getting out there and doing it.” See “Ole Hovind Award,” <http://www.canadianbirkie.com/special-awards>, accessed April 7, 2011.

<sup>106</sup> Servus Heritage Festival “Fun Festival Facts,” accessed April 7, 2011, <http://heritage-festival.com/fun-festival-facts/>.

<sup>107</sup> “History of the Scandinavian Heritage Society of Edmonton,” updated by Kenneth Domier, January 30, 2010, received by email correspondence with Kenneth Domier, March 10, 2011.

<sup>108</sup> Doug Peterson, “Heritage (Gurgle, Gurgle) Days,” *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 14, September 1980, 6.

<sup>109</sup> “Heritage Days,” *Nyheter*, May 2003, 6.

One may wonder whether a Scandinavian-Canadian identity has been more prevalent than a Norwegian-Canadian one because of this cooperation. Not only have the Scandinavian-Canadian groups been planning the pavilion together, they also cooperated in building the Scandinavian Centre and later in the rental of the Dutch Canadian Centre.<sup>110</sup> Although this certainly points to a special bond between the Scandinavian groups, it does not confirm that such an identity has been strong. It is reasonable to assume that the Scandinavian Centre was a joint effort because of financial reasons. That they have chosen to cooperate during Heritage Days could obviously have to do with finances as well. On the other hand, it has certainly made sense to cooperate since certain traits in the Scandinavian cultures are similar, which is clear from the Scandinavian folk-dancing groups. However, Norwegian Canadians have worked especially hard on their Norwegian displays, suggesting that they have been having their own agenda. This thought is further strengthened by reading about the Scandinavian pavilion on the festival's website, where it is stated that "[t]hough we enter as one group, each of the five countries celebrate and honour their own heritage, language and many cultural traits brought to Canada by all of our forefathers through food, music and culture."<sup>111</sup> This Scandinavian cooperation has been successful, which has made it even more natural to continue with the cooperation. Throughout the years, the Scandinavian pavilion has received a number of prizes. In fact, the Scandinavian pavilion has been awarded a prize in twenty-one out of the twenty-seven years since the founding of the Heritage Society.<sup>112</sup> The cooperation, then, seems to have been a matter of convenience more than an example of a strong Scandinavian-Canadian identity. The prizes have generated pride among the members of Solglyt because of their specific contributions, which seem to have been great.<sup>113</sup> For instance, in 1995, the pavilion was judged in the top three for the third year in a row, and the Solglyt president remarked that "[t]he participation by our lodge made me very proud to say I was a member of Solglyt Lodge, Sons of Norway."<sup>114</sup> The winning of prizes also indicate that the Scandinavian pavilion was distinct and visible, and the cultural displays must have drawn the attention of many visitors.

The theme of the Norwegian display during Heritage Days has been changing every year, however, some topics, articles, and activities have been recurrent. The main focus has

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<sup>110</sup> Personal correspondence with Kenneth Domier, March 8, 2011.

<sup>111</sup> "Scandinavia," *Servus Heritage Festival*, accessed April 14, 2011, <http://heritage-festival.com/pavilions/53/>.

<sup>112</sup> The awards have ranged from prizes for best food service, best cultural education display and large pavilion management, to the most culturally authentic and the people's choice award. "History of the Scandinavian Heritage Society of Edmonton," updated by Kenneth Domier, January 30, 2010.

<sup>113</sup> "Report on Summer Activities: Heritage Festival 1995," *Nyheter*, October 1995, 2.

<sup>114</sup> Helen Evjen, "A message from the President," *Nyheter*, October 1995, 1.

naturally been to teach visitors something about the group's ethnic background, and this has been done through various exhibits. A Viking ship replica has been presented, as well as pewter, *rosemaling* and Norwegian sweaters.<sup>115</sup> Some years have also focused on famous Norwegians, which have included not only literary figures and explorers, but also Norwegian Canadians and their contributions to Canada, either from political, athletic or literary life.<sup>116</sup> This has demonstrated to the visitors that Norwegians historically have been a strong presence in Canada. The Solglyt band, the Freeloaders, was in the 1980s and early 1990s also often present to play folk music and accompany the Valhalla folk dancers and the junior dancers.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, spectators have been asked to take part in the cultural activities, so that in addition to the exhibits they have been teaching the visitors some of the crafts, just like they used to at school displays.<sup>118</sup> Heritage Days has been seen as a "multicultural extravaganza" by the Scandinavian Centre, where one can taste foods and see displays of a great number of nations which together make up Canada. Like all the other groups at the heritage festival, Scandinavians have been an important part of the mosaic, and this has been demonstrated by teaching visitors some of the traditions.<sup>119</sup> In addition to contributions made by members of the lodge, folk dancers and other entertainers from Norway have performed at the festival.<sup>120</sup> In this way the authenticity of the display has been ensured. The food section of the pavilion has been serving various Scandinavian meals and treats, among them being Norwegian and Swedish meatballs with red cabbage, which, interestingly, have been called Vikings on a Stick. The name underlines the important function Vikings have played in the portrayal of Norwegian culture.<sup>121</sup>

In fact, the theme of Vikings seems to have been one of the most popular ones to display. This focus was not central in school and museum displays, but has been brought to the fore during Heritage Days. A large Viking ship replica was displayed at Heritage Days in 1982, and members of the Scandinavian Centre were told to grow their beards "to show the rest of Edmonton that there's still some Viking blood running in your veins."<sup>122</sup> Vikings were

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<sup>115</sup> Solglyt Lodge, Minutes of General Meetings, Edmonton, Canada, June 3, 1985 and June 6, 1986, retrieved from the Sons of Norway Storage Room, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>116</sup> Information received by personal correspondence with Kenneth Domier, March 10, 2011.

<sup>117</sup> Kris Nyhus, "First Test for Folkdancers," *Scandinavian News*, vol. 19, no. 42, April, 1985, 9; and "History of the Scandinavian Heritage Society of Edmonton," updated by Kenneth Domier, January 30, 2010, received by email correspondence with Kenneth Domier, March 10, 2011.

<sup>118</sup> Astrid Hope, "79 Heritage Days," *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 4, September 28, 1979, 6.

<sup>119</sup> Astrid Hope, "After a Shaky Start," *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 14, September, 1980, 5.

<sup>120</sup> "History of the Scandinavian Heritage Society of Edmonton," updated by Kenneth Domier, January 30, 2010.

<sup>121</sup> Kenneth Domier, "Edmonton Heritage Festival August 3 and 4, 1986," *Scandinavian News*, vol. 21, no. 1, June 1986, 10.

<sup>122</sup> "Want to be a Viking?," *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 27, March, 1982, 1.

seen as true symbols of their heritage and they have featured prominently in the displays.<sup>123</sup> This demonstrates that the members have referred to the distant past to invent new ethnic traditions.<sup>124</sup> In 1988, their Viking ship replica made the front pages of the *Edmonton Journal* and pictures of it were used in advertising for the festival long afterwards.<sup>125</sup> The extra publicity seems to have encouraged the work on the pavilion, and yet another Viking attraction, Viking family cut-out silhouettes for photographs of visitors, was added in 2006.

Trolls were another attraction that was added, and in 2000 the two trolls, Gubben and Hodda, appeared for the first time. A carved wooden troll, weighing about 180 kilos (400 pounds), appeared in 2008.<sup>126</sup> Vikings and trolls undoubtedly have given the pavilion increased attention, and therefore seem to have become central in the presentation of Norwegian culture. Trolls commonly feature in Norwegian fairytales, and have therefore been revived as symbols to portray the distinctness of Norwegian culture.<sup>127</sup> The symbols certainly have made the display more exotic, and made their pavilion more distinct from the others. Although folk dancers and folk music have added a Scandinavian flair, other ethnic groups have such attractions as well. This is also true when it comes to ethnic foods and crafts. This could partly explain why Vikings and trolls became and still are so central in the Scandinavian display. The festival program from 2002 showed that most groups advertised with the aspects of their culture which made them different from the other cultures on display.<sup>128</sup> The Scandinavian advertisement noted that their trolls “usually live in caves and in deep dark forests and are reluctant to come in contact with humans, but they enjoyed the festival so much that they will be back!”<sup>129</sup> Visitors could have their photographs taken with them, and “[t]here might even be a few Vikings on the prowl!!”<sup>130</sup> These symbols demonstrated that Norwegian Canadians had not been completely assimilated. Rather, Norwegian culture was distinct and exotic.

As seen, the displays that have been organized by the Sons of Norway and the Scandinavian Heritage Society have been centred on ethnic symbols, and only certain aspects of the group’s culture can be expressed due to time constraints and room or pavilion size. In

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<sup>123</sup> See for example Susanne Balslov, “Are You a Furious-Looking Male Person?” *Scandinavian Centre News*, vol. 19, no. 30, June 15, 1982, 5.

<sup>124</sup> Hobsbawm, *Invention of Traditions*, 1-5.

<sup>125</sup> “History of the Scandinavian Heritage Society of Edmonton.”

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> “Norwegian Heritage in Alberta.”

<sup>128</sup> For an example of this, see “Cultural Pavilions: Scottish,” in “Join the Celebration: Edmonton Heritage Festival 2002,” *Edmonton Journal*, festival supplement, 29.

<sup>129</sup> “Cultural Pavilions: Scandinavians,” in “Join the Celebration: Edmonton Heritage Festival 2002,” *Edmonton Journal*, festival supplement, 29.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.



addition, it is likely that the audience seldom wishes to become active members of the culture on display, rather, they are most likely interested in learning about the exotic and folkloric aspects of it. Thus, to some degree, Norwegian, and Scandinavian, culture has had to be portrayed to Canadian society in a symbolic way. The Multiculturalism Policy has been criticized exactly because of its folkloric focus and its emphasis on symbolic expressions of ethnicity.<sup>131</sup> Manoly Lupul has even argued that Multiculturalism is dead as a result of this.<sup>132</sup> He has further criticized Norwegians, and other Northern Europeans, because they have not had the same perceptions of Multiculturalism as Ukrainian Canadians. Because they have not been eager to start bilingual schools, for instance, their perceptions of Multiculturalism are deemed “foggy.”<sup>133</sup> As this chapter has shown, there is little to suggest that by the 1970s, Norwegian Canadians lived in a functional Norwegian culture where the Norwegian language was important. Instead, their ethnicity was expressed through symbols, but these symbols did show great pride in their culture. To be a Norwegian Canadian seems to have been to identify with ethnic symbols, such as food and holiday celebrations. The festivals and displays have been making it possible for them to express their ethnicity more publicly and show their role in the building of Canada. Thus, contrary to Lupul’s argument, the Multiculturalism Policy has been of great importance, especially among the older members of the Solglyt Lodge.

### ***Norwegian-Canadian Self-Perception Today***

Living in a society which is declared multicultural certainly opens up the possibility of feeling ethnic, and some Norwegian Canadians definitely identify with their heritage today. This chapter has so far argued that the Norwegian-Canadian identity was instrumental and thus changeable, and that it had become largely symbolic by the 1970s. Yet, the symbolic nature of their ethnicity did not make their ancestry irrelevant to them. Interviews conducted with six members, three women and three men, of the Solglyt Lodge in October 2010 and March 2011 further confirm this. Although, for instance, bilingual schools arguably could have created stronger connections to Norway, their heritage has shaped the way they perceive themselves. The members who were interviewed come from a wide variety of backgrounds, yet in spite of their different upbringings, they shared many similar ideas and perceptions about what being of Norwegian descent meant to them.

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<sup>131</sup> Richard J. F. Day, *Multiculturalism and the History of Canadian Diversity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 205, accessed on April 7, 2011, <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/ualberta/Doc?id=10219316&ppg=200>

<sup>132</sup> Manoly R. Lupul, “Multiculturalism and Canada’s White Ethnicities,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies/Etudes ethniques au Canada* 15:1 (1983): 106.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 103-106.

As has been suggested in earlier chapters, language was not the most important hallmark of the ethnic identity of Norwegian Canadians. This assumption was also confirmed by the people who were interviewed. The only one who was fluent in Norwegian had been born in Norway and was therefore a first generation immigrant. The others differed in the amount of Norwegian they could speak, and whether or not they wanted to learn the language. Knowing other languages was by one respondent thought of as important, “particularly when it is connected to your heritage.”<sup>134</sup> He had taken some Norwegian classes, but was not fluent in the language. However, he expressed that he wished he had learnt more Norwegian when he was growing up, and that he then could have taught at least some of it to his children. Richard Alba argues that although the study of ancestral languages can be seen as signs of an ethnic revival, it can also be “a purely academic affair.”<sup>135</sup> In other words, the acquisition of the language has no other function besides triggering personal interest if a person has no one to speak it to. This might be true, yet his argument ignores the fact that the language that triggers one’s personal interest usually is not picked at random. When members of the Solglyt Lodge decide to attend Norwegian classes, it generally has to do with their interest in their ethnic heritage, although few of their family members and friends would be able to speak the language with them. Among some members, then, language has become one of the symbols which manifest their ethnic identity. Some of the members of Solglyt keep in touch with relatives and friends in Norway through letters, emails, and visits to Norway. Quite a few of the people who were interviewed had visited Norway on several occasions, and one woman uttered the conviction that she feels at home on the farm of her ancestors. This connection to the farm was in fact so strong that in her house she keeps a jar with Norwegian soil that she brought home with her.<sup>136</sup> The Norwegian courses people attend are therefore not always strictly academic, but are indeed attended to help them communicate with others who speak Norwegian and to feel a closer connection to their Norwegian roots.<sup>137</sup>

Most of them, however, correspond with relatives and friends in English, and are not specifically interested in learning Norwegian.<sup>138</sup> Yet, they uttered that they saw the value of knowing more than one language. Burnet and Palmer note that despite a sharp decline in knowledge of ancestral languages from generation to generation, among the third generation most ethnic Canadians are in favour of retention of ancestral languages among their children.

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<sup>134</sup> Interview conducted with Wayne Nordstrom by email correspondence, March 24, 2011.

<sup>135</sup> Alba, *Ethnic Identity*, 77.

<sup>136</sup> Interview conducted with Priscilla Kachmar, October 18, 2010, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>137</sup> Interview conducted with Wayne Nordstrom by email correspondence, March 24, 2011.

<sup>138</sup> Interview conducted with Priscilla Kachmar, October 18, 2010, Edmonton, Canada and interview conducted with Roger Bruce by email correspondence, April 2, 2011.

The reason, however, is not to maintain traditions or customs, but to give their children a cultural and economic advantage of knowing more than one language.<sup>139</sup> Norwegian must be considered a rather small and insignificant world language with only approximately 4.9 million native speakers, thus the advantages of knowing Norwegian are rather small.<sup>140</sup> This could help explain why some Canadians of Norwegian descent are not particularly interested in learning their ancestral language, and would prefer that their children, and themselves, become fluent in French or a language more widely spoken than Norwegian.<sup>141</sup> For instance, one member of the Sons of Norway, whose father was of Norwegian and mother of Russian and German descent, attended a Russian language class weekly, despite saying that she felt more connected to Norway than to either Germany or Russia since she grew up in a relatively large Scandinavian settlement.<sup>142</sup> This clearly indicates that for many Norwegian Canadians, the Norwegian language is not an important indicator of their ethnicity since they do not wish to learn it or pass it on to their children. On the contrary, they would rather have them learn other languages to better secure their future. Interestingly, this was also the case with a man who had immigrated to Canada in the 1950s, clearly showing that the retention of the Norwegian language was of less concern than other traditions.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, Norwegian culture was clearly passed on in other ways. This supports Alba's theory that ethnic language study is largely an academic affair, and not a sign of ethnic revival. For many Norwegian Canadians this seems to be true, although a few members of the Sons of Norway did take an interest which was of a more functional nature.

Although language is not an important indicator of their Norwegian-Canadian identity today, ethnic foods are. Ethnic foods were served in their homes growing up, and to a large extent this is still part of their cuisine. However, Norwegian food is now largely enjoyed on special occasions only. Alba argues that since the eating of ethnic foods is diminishing in many ethnic groups, this is another sign of how the identity of ethnic groups has become symbolic.<sup>144</sup> In the case of Norwegian Canadians this is most certainly correct, since Norwegian food rarely is enjoyed on regular days. However, one must not forget that Norwegian cuisine has been changing as well, and due to factors such as globalization, it is likely that, to a great extent, the average Norwegian Canadian eats the same food today as the

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<sup>139</sup> Burnet and Palmer, *"Coming Canadians,"* 214.

<sup>140</sup> See for example Statistics Norway, accessed April 18, 2011, [http://www.ssb.no/folkemengde\\_en/arkiv/tab-2011-02-24-01-en.html](http://www.ssb.no/folkemengde_en/arkiv/tab-2011-02-24-01-en.html).

<sup>141</sup> Interview conducted with Nordahl Flakstad by email correspondence, March 27, 2011, and interview conducted with Elnora Hibbert, October 19, 2010, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>142</sup> Interview conducted with Jan Stemo, October 19, 2010, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>143</sup> Interview conducted with Nordahl Flakstad by email correspondence, March 27, 2011.

<sup>144</sup> Alba, *Ethnic Identity*, 85-91.

average Norwegian. With that said, the food that was thought of as Norwegian and most frequently consumed by the people who were interviewed, was relatively unvaried.<sup>145</sup> Thus, we see that the Norwegian food they eat has become largely symbolic.

Ethnic food is commonly served on Christmas Eve, and by celebrating Christmas on December 24, another Norwegian tradition is maintained. This was considered very important by some of those who were interviewed, yet others had not even considered this tradition to be Norwegian. One woman said that she was not brought up Norwegian at all, yet she remembered that her mother baked various Norwegian cakes and cookies, such as *lefse* and *krumkaker*.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, she noted that her family celebrated Christmas Eve after coming home from church, a tradition which most definitely was brought over from Norway. This tradition, however, had been adapted to a Canadian way of life. For dinner they served turkey, fish and *lefse*, thereby mixing Norwegian and Canadian Christmas traditions.<sup>147</sup> Thus, after admitting to not being brought up Norwegian at all, she came to realize that she in fact had been influenced by Norwegian customs growing up. Yet, intermarriage led to a weakening of Norwegian Christmas traditions for her and others. She married a Ukrainian man and Ukrainian traditions greatly influenced their family.<sup>148</sup> Other members also indicated that intermarriage resulted in the discontinuation of traditions.<sup>149</sup> One woman had married a man of British ancestry, and she related that it was really difficult for her to get used to opening presents on Christmas Day, not Christmas Eve. In fact, she said this was “a psychological problem for a long time.”<sup>150</sup> Her Norwegian heritage, therefore, seems to have been essential to her, and it demonstrates that ethnicity does not necessarily lose its importance when it is expressed largely through symbols. The celebration of Christmas in a Norwegian fashion and the eating of ethnic foods were to a large degree optional, but were still seen as part of who they were.

Personal involvement and curiosity about their heritage also played an important role. Many members of the Solglyt Lodge had initiated their own genealogical projects and also

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<sup>145</sup> Interview conducted with Priscilla Kachmar, October 18, 2010, Jan Stemo, March 19, 2011, Elnora Hibbert, March 19, 2011, and conversation with members of Solglyt during personal participation at General Meeting, October 12, 2010, and March 8, 2011.

<sup>146</sup> Cone shaped cookies.

<sup>147</sup> Interview conducted with Priscilla Kachmar, October 18, 2010, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>148</sup> In fact, her children went to Ukrainian immersion schools, participated in Ukrainian dancing and Ukrainian scouting, and she noted that this sometimes had made her sad because she could for instance not help her children with their homework.

<sup>149</sup> Interview conducted with Jan Stemo and Elnora Hibbert, October 19, 2010, Edmonton, Canada.

<sup>150</sup> Interview conducted with Elnora Hibbert, October 19, 2010, Edmonton, Canada.

instructed others who wanted to know where and how to begin such an undertaking.<sup>151</sup> One woman said that she and her brother always had been interested in where they came from, since they never had been surrounded by any extended family. This resulted in a large genealogical project started in the 1960s by her brother. She helped her brother in his research by going to Norway to visit their relatives and has continued with his research after his death.<sup>152</sup> Another man said that he had started taking interest in his Norwegian heritage in his late teens and had done a lot of genealogical work to put his family tree together. Also, in 2002, he initiated a significant cultural project aimed at building a miniature replica of the Gol stave church, and he initiated the making of a guidebook of Scandinavian sights in Alberta, *Scandinavian Connections*, which was published by the Scandinavian Trade and Cultural Society in 2007. Several people were involved in these undertakings. An impressive 2100 hours went into the building and furnishing of the stave church model, which he argued has “served to promote a greater awareness of Norwegian culture,” for instance by the talks and presentations he held to different audiences in Alberta and Saskatchewan.<sup>153</sup> For some, the interest in their Norwegian roots came later in life. For instance, the woman who had continued with her brother’s genealogical project did not become interested in this until 2007. In that year, one of her neighbours asked her to volunteer for the Birkebeiner Ski Festival. The neighbour’s argument was that skiing in the cold was what Norwegians did, and being of Norwegian ancestry she had to volunteer. Her volunteer experience at the 2007 Birkebeiner made her join the Sons of Norway a month later, originally only for a year to see if this would be of interest to her. She ended up staying, and has been part of the executive board.<sup>154</sup>

Most of the people who were interviewed expressed the view that their Norwegian-Canadian identity to a large extent was maintained through their affiliation with the Sons of Norway. This is not surprising considering that all of the people who were interviewed were members of the organization. By taking an active part in the events hosted by the Solglyt Lodge they not only learned more about their heritage, but they met others with the same background. This shows the important function the Sons of Norway lodges have had in the maintenance of a Norwegian heritage in Alberta. Everyone who was interviewed mentioned that through the lodge they were able to commemorate their heritage, for example by taking

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<sup>151</sup> Kenneth Domier, information received by personal correspondence, March 7, 2011 and “Genealogy,” *Nyheter*, September-October, 2008, 3.

<sup>152</sup> Priscilla Kachmar, interview conducted on October 18, 2010, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

<sup>153</sup> Wayne Nordstrom, “The Gol Stave Church Model,” information received by email correspondence, March 21, 2011, Wayne Nordstrom, interview conducted by email correspondence, March 24, 2011, and The Scandinavian Trade and Cultural Society, preface and acknowledgments to *Scandinavian Connections: A Guide to Sites in Alberta* (Edmonton: The Scandinavian Trade and Heritage Society, 2007, i-iii).

<sup>154</sup> Priscilla Kachmar, interview, October 18, 2010.

part in the *Lutefisk* supper and *Syttende mai* flag-raising. Furthermore, many of them had learnt more about their ancestor's homeland and cultural traditions, and this had strengthened their pride in Norway. Still, it is apparent that the maintenance of their cultural identity was largely based on their personal involvement. Most of the people who were interviewed would not have joined the Sons of Norway without reflecting about where they or their ancestors came from and by, for example, initiating genealogical projects.<sup>155</sup> Two women mentioned that they had not been interested in their heritage when they were younger, but had increasingly become more interested with time. They believed that an age factor plays an important role when it comes to interest in one's heritage. They noted that children of Norwegian heritage today are not particularly interested in their heritage either, yet one of the women also mentioned that her grandson had attended the Trollhaugen camp on several occasions.<sup>156</sup> Thus, they are perhaps not as disinterested as the two women expressed. Yet, their comment further underlines the concern that Norwegian culture might die out in Canada due to a lack of interest among younger people.

Norwegian Canadians are proud of being of Norwegian descent, especially because of what Norwegian pioneers brought with them and contributed to Canada. The pioneers' hard work, perseverance, stoicism and value system were brought up as important by many, and the introduction of skiing and the Camrose Lutheran College were also mentioned as Norwegian contributions of which they were proud. This shows that aspects of their Norwegian Canadian identity can be traced back to the pioneer era. Their accomplishments were praised, and some believed that the Norwegian pioneers had made them who they were today. One man, for instance, said that "[i]t makes me feel proud that my ancestors contributed in such a significant way to the betterment of Alberta," and he believed his grandparents' good value system and approach on life had an influence on him while he was growing up.<sup>157</sup> He further noted that "[e]ven though they faced some difficult times when they immigrated to Alberta, they persevered and through hard work and effort they survived. I have seen such values in other Norwegian Canadians as well."<sup>158</sup> It is thus evident that Norwegian Canadians had inherited great values from their ancestors, and this fits into the pattern that Swyripa has described, where immigrant settler peoples on the prairie ascribed such descriptions to themselves.<sup>159</sup> It is interesting, however, that the Lutheran church was not

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<sup>155</sup> Priscilla Kachmar, interview, October 19, 2010 and Wayne Nordstrom, email interview, March 24, 2011.

<sup>156</sup> Jan Stemo and Elnora Hibbert, interviews, October 19, 2010.

<sup>157</sup> Interview conducted with Wayne Nordstrom by email correspondence, March 24, 2011.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes*, 121.

mentioned as part of their Norwegian heritage or as an important pioneer contribution to Canada. This could suggest that the vital function the church had played in the immigrants' lives had been diminished since the later generations were well-adapted to Canada. Since their ethnicity had been transformed and largely centred on symbols, the church had outlived its ethnic function. There is still overlap between membership in the Sons of Norway and the Lutheran church, but the church is no longer seen as a carrier of Norwegian traditions.<sup>160</sup>

Some of the interviewees expressed that they had been shaped by their rural roots as well. One woman did not know what defined her personality more; being Norwegian or being of rural roots. Her rural roots had definitely made her who she was, and she still felt very connected to the land. Everyone from rural settlements, according to her, knew where they came from, and there was for instance no money available to travel to take part in culture or sports camps. Urban people were looked upon as smarter, yet more fragile, and there was a sense of community in rural areas. Despite this sense of community where everyone shared a rural background, they were also aware of what they were not. She mentioned that her family was not like the French and Italians, where they were quite emotional. Norwegians, on the other hand, expressed that "that is nothing to cry about" and went on with their lives. Thus we see that Norwegians were ascribed with favourable attributes, such as sturdiness, which again have shaped the way in which Norwegian Canadians perceive themselves. One man noted that he was proud of his Norwegian heritage because Norwegians who came to Canada contributed greatly and can be found in all levels of society. Their pioneer background made them hardy and strong, and values such as freedom and equality were essential. All in all, the pioneers brought with them a legacy which, he argued, has enriched Canada: "Norwegians, like many others, value freedom and the right to choose. They cherish fairness and equality. With value systems such as these, all can benefit."<sup>161</sup> The notion of the Norwegians as hard-working pioneers with a good value system was prevalent, and we see that a rural, western-Canadian identity coincided with their Norwegian-Canadian identity.

### ***Norwegian Identity as Portrayed in Two Former Norwegian Settlements***

As mentioned in chapter two, the main area of Norwegian settlement was central Alberta. This area is no longer settled by a great number of Norwegian Canadians, yet we can still find traces of a Norwegian affiliation in towns such as New Norway and Camrose. At first glance there is nothing about New Norway which reveals that the town has Norwegian

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<sup>160</sup> Interview conducted with Nordahl Flakstad email correspondence March 27, 2011.

<sup>161</sup> Interview conducted with Wayne Nordstrom by email correspondence, March 24, 2011.

roots, except for the name. Yet, on closer examination, some institutions built by the early settlers are still in use. The Bethesda Lutheran Church, for instance, still holds services every Sunday.<sup>162</sup> Furthermore, throughout the town there are banners welcoming visitors, where “New Norway, Alberta” is written in blue letters on a white background. Hovering on top of “New Norway” we find a red Viking ship, clearly indicating that the town identifies with its Norwegian past, both by choosing the colours of the Norwegian flag and by displaying a Viking ship in its logo.<sup>163</sup> Perhaps even more noteworthy is the town cemetery. A tribute has been raised in honour of the pioneers, giving credit to their efforts. The graveyard is also interesting because some of the older graves have inscriptions in Norwegian, and some also note both the date and place of birth. This reflects the dual identity of the early settlers. They were born in Norway, but died in Canada – their new homeland. Burying the dead became a tangible symbol of how Canada had become their new home, since the dead were buried in foreign soil.<sup>164</sup> Newer graves, however, do not relate any special attachment to Norway, yet there are tombstones of other ethnicities that show an attachment to their ancestors’ countries.<sup>165</sup> This indicates that Norwegian Canadians’ identity is tied to other aspects of life, and that their heritage is commemorated in other ways.

Another town which was especially shaped by the Norwegian pioneers was Camrose, in particular because of the founding of the Camrose Lutheran College. In 2004, the college merged with the University of Alberta and became known as the Augustana Campus.<sup>166</sup> Besides the offering of Norwegian courses, there is not much left on campus that reminds visitors of the Norwegian origins of the college. Yet, during anniversaries, aspects of its Norwegian history have been highlighted. In honour of the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 1986, for instance, the then Norwegian Crown Prince and Princess visited Camrose and added prestige to the celebrations. This was undoubtedly very well received among Norwegian Canadians all over Alberta, and members of various Sons of Norway lodges were present, wearing national costumes and waving Norwegian flags to take part in the celebration and Royal visit.<sup>167</sup> In the school year of 2010-2011 they celebrated the Centenary Homecoming Celebrations, and posters showing events from the college’s history were displayed around campus. Some of these posters portrayed the college’s Norwegian roots, for instance, by displaying a large

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<sup>162</sup> Information received on research trip to New Norway, October 14, 2010.

<sup>163</sup> Research trip to New Norway, October 14, 2010.

<sup>164</sup> Swyripa, *Storied Landscapes*, 66.

<sup>165</sup> Visit to the New Norway Cemetery during research trip to New Norway, October 14, 2010.

<sup>166</sup> “Augustana Campus History,” pamphlet received from the Alumni Office at the Augustana Faculty, October 14, 2010.

<sup>167</sup> Astrid Hope, “Royal Day at Camrose,” *Scandinavian News*, vol. 21, no. 4, August 1986, 1 and Dan Jensen, “Camrose Extends Royal Welcome to Royal Couple,” *Camrose Booster*, June 3, 1986, 2.



Viking ship outside of a campus building; a former teacher standing in a doorway with “velkommen” – welcome – written on the door; and a picture of the then Norwegian Crown Princess during her visit to Camrose in 1986.<sup>168</sup> Students thereby were reminded of the college’s Norwegian past, although the college’s Norwegian roots mainly are noted on special occasions only and romanticized for symbolic purposes.

Besides the college there are other traces of Norwegian origins left in Camrose. Some of the park benches are decorated with *rosemaling* in honour of the Norwegian pioneers and their crafts, and the town also hosts a half-size replica of a Viking ship.<sup>169</sup> In addition, Camrose hosts both a former Norwegian Lutheran Church and a Lutheran Bible Institute. The Messiah Lutheran Church was founded by Norwegian settlers, but there are no longer any services held in Norwegian, and the members come from a wide variety of backgrounds. When asked about the Norwegian background of the church, an employee said that there no longer were any Norwegian ties, yet later related that they hold a *Lutefisk* supper every year and that preparations for it were taking place in the church basement.<sup>170</sup> It is therefore clear that the church does have some Norwegian traditions left, but it is important to point out that the traditions that are upheld have nothing to do with the church itself and its functions. Thus, the Lutheran church is to some extent still connected to its Norwegian roots, but it is seldom commemorated.

Perhaps the clearest example of Camrose’s Norwegian roots is the bakery called the Lefse House. The idea originated with a lady who started making *lefse* to be sold at local Saturday markets, but the demand was so great that she started a business with a friend. It originally opened in 1988, but got new owners in 2002, and is specializing in Scandinavian treats, not only *lefse*, although the focus is mainly on Norwegian foods.<sup>171</sup> The bakery also has a coffee shop and gift gallery, in addition to running a catering service. Some of their products are available at select stores around Alberta and they even offer home shipping.<sup>172</sup> The interior of the bakery is red, white, and blue, and water colour paintings of Norway on the walls in combination with taped Norwegian folk music emphasize the bakery’s Norwegian affiliation. As Burnet and Palmer have noted, *authenticity* is a word which seems important to

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<sup>168</sup> Posters seen on research trip to Camrose, October 19, 2010.

<sup>169</sup> Information retrieved from research trip to Camrose, October 14, 2010, and *Scandinavian Connections*, 132.

<sup>170</sup> Visit to Messiah Lutheran Church during research trip to Camrose, October 14, 2010.

<sup>171</sup> *Scandinavian Connections*, 130 and Bernell Odegard, owner of the Lefse House, information received by email correspondence, April 30, 2011.

<sup>172</sup> The Lefse House, accessed April 11, 2011, <http://www.thelefsehouse.ca/index.html>; and email correspondence with Bernell Odegard, owner of the Lefse House, April 30, 2011.

the bakery, and the displays function almost like a museum.<sup>173</sup> Items on display include containers decorated with *rosemaling*, *Hardanger* textiles, dolls with Norwegian folk costumes, chip carving, and knitwear. In addition to this, visitors can buy various Scandinavian items, among them being t-shirts with Scandinavian imprints and imported Norwegian chocolates. This makes it possible for citizens of Camrose to boast of their heritage and publicly show others that they are of Scandinavian ancestry. Norwegian magazines can be read when using the washrooms, and the washrooms are also decorated with recipes written as if they were pronounced with a Norwegian accent.<sup>174</sup> It is also possible to buy Norwegian waffle, *krumkake* and *goro*<sup>175</sup> irons, *lefse* sticks, rolling pins, and burners, in addition to Norwegian recipes. The Lefse House, then, makes it easier for Norwegian Canadians to maintain their traditions. As such, the bakery can be seen as an important novel Norwegian-Canadian institution.

The bakery serves “Authentic Scandinavian Meals,” yet it is safe to say that neither the Lefse Wrap nor the Norwegian Nachos were brought to Canada by Norwegian pioneers.<sup>176</sup> Seeing that wraps are relatively novel food items in Norway, and nachos are originally Mexican, they are instead examples of how Norwegian traditions have been reformulated and adapted to a new way of life. Parts of the food that is served, however, most definitely have their roots in Scandinavian, and especially Norwegian, cuisine, and the owner stated that “[w]e began adding to our menu, based on foods that we remembered eating in our own homes growing up. We believe that food serves to preserve memories and heritage.”<sup>177</sup> Still, some of the food is combined in various ways so that entirely new meals are made. Burnet and Palmer note that the modification of food is common both to appeal to the tastes of the general public as well as the specific ethnic group one appeals to.<sup>178</sup> The meals, then, are reinventions of meals that were brought over by the pioneers, and can be seen as aspects of an invented tradition.<sup>179</sup> The fact that an ethnic bakery can survive shows that the citizens of Camrose still feel connected to their Norwegian roots, and the bakery is one of the most explicit expressions of Norwegian culture visitors are exposed to.

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<sup>173</sup> Burnet and Palmer, “*Coming Canadians*,” 215.

<sup>174</sup> Visit to the Lefse House during research trip to Camrose, October 14, 2010.

<sup>175</sup> A Norwegian type of Christmas cookie.

<sup>176</sup> “Our Kitchen to Yours,” the Lefse House, accessed April 10, [http://www.thefsehouse.ca/our\\_menu.html](http://www.thefsehouse.ca/our_menu.html), 2011.

<sup>177</sup> Bernell Odegard, information received by email correspondence, April 30, 2011.

<sup>178</sup> Burnet and Palmer, “*Coming Canadians*,” 217.

<sup>179</sup> Hobsbawm, *Invention of Traditions*, 1-8.

## **Concluding Remarks**

The ethnic identity of Norwegian Canadians has gone through a process of adaptation since the pioneer era. The Multiculturalism Policy resulted in increased activity in the Sons of Norway lodges, and especially in the Solglyt Lodge in Edmonton. The Sons of Norway was no longer needed to support the members, yet they still chose to take an active part within the lodge and to promote their culture to Canadian society. Members were no longer necessarily of Norwegian ancestry, which demonstrates the changes the organization had gone through since its foundation in 1913. The various events the lodge has been hosting show that the Norwegian-Canadian identity to a large extent has manifested itself through symbols. Few, if any, of the members live in a functioning Norwegian culture like people did in the pioneer era. Yet, although their identity by the 1970s had become symbolic, it was, and still is, vital to them and seen as part of who they were. Norwegian culture has been perceived as artistic and culinary, and the image of the brave Viking and explorer has also been apparent, especially during the Heritage Festival in Edmonton. Some traditions have been invented, such as the Leif Erikson celebration, whereas others, like the *Syttende mai* flag-raising, have been taking on new functions. Some Solglyt members have been concerned with the lack of cultural interest among adolescents, yet the Trollhaugen camp and *Syttende mai* flag-raising are events which have helped trigger their interest. In interviews, members expressed that they were proud of their ancestry and the values which the pioneers had introduced to Canada. In addition, it is evident that they still were proud to be Canadians, and thought Norwegian, and in some instances Scandinavian, values had an important place in the Canadian mosaic. The Lutheran church no longer played a major part in their ethnic identity. Instead, the eating of ethnic foods and selected celebrations had taken on an essential role. Former Norwegian settlements also demonstrate this shift in that former Norwegian institutions seldom commemorate their heritage, whereas the ethnic bakery The Lefse House pays tribute to Norway and Scandinavia. Some have claimed that Norwegians assimilated quickly in Canada, especially because they lost their language relatively fast, yet, it is obvious that the picture is a bit more complex and a little less bleak. This chapter has shown that assimilation and retention in fact are not zero-sum processes, and the advertisement for the *Syttende mai* banquet seems to hold true: traditions never die; they are simply adapted and reinvented to fit with a changing reality.

## **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

Large-scale Norwegian immigration to Canada only started in the beginning of the twentieth century. The settlers came from a wide range of places in Norway, and a great number came from settlements in the United States. Most of the settlers chose to homestead in the three prairie provinces or in British Columbia, and towns such as New Norway, Camrose, Bergen and Bardo were founded by Norwegian settlers. Norwegians had been targeted as preferred immigrants because they were similar to the British-Canadian elites, and they were thought of as easily assimilated. This chapter will outline the main findings in the three previous chapters, and show that despite the tendency to think of Norwegian settlers in terms of assimilation, a Norwegian-Canadian identity was formed in the early settlements. With time, and especially as a result of the Multiculturalism Policy, initiated in the 1970s, this ethnic identity was reformulated and expressed in a more symbolic fashion, yet it still held great importance and meaning to Canadians of Norwegian descent in western Canada.

### ***Main Findings***

Norwegians in western Canada were not as numerous as in the United States, which in many instances led to smaller settlements and more scattering of the Norwegian immigrants. This in turn made it more difficult to maintain their Norwegian heritage, especially in towns where there were no other Norwegians. Yet, as chapter two argued, the Norwegian settlers did not become completely assimilated and lost in touch with their Norwegian roots. Instead they made use of Norwegian traditions to adapt to Canadian society, and during the years leading up to the Great Depression a blending of the two cultures took place. Institutions and organizations were established in order to help Norwegians adapt to their new homeland, and especially important were Lutheran churches and educational institutions. The church became an important religious and social arena where Norwegians could meet and also retain the Norwegian language, whereas their focus on education entailed both an element of assimilation and retention. The schools helped accommodate the Norwegian immigrants to Canadian society by introducing the English language to them, but chapter two also noted how Norwegians in western Canada were united through their efforts to establish and build schools. The Lutheran faith played an important role for the Norwegian settlers and it manifested itself in their focus on education as well. The churches were also influenced by the Norwegian-American Lutheran church since many of the settlers came via the United States, yet, it is clear that in spite of this cooperation, Norwegian Canadians identified more strongly with Canada. This is also evident from the establishment of the Sons of Norway in western

Canada, where Norwegian Canadians right from the start wanted to create a separate Canadian district. Norwegian-Canadian newspapers further demonstrated this, and together with ladies' aids, youth groups and ski clubs they helped the Norwegian settlers adjust to a new life in Canada. Through all the aforementioned organizations they could maintain Norwegian traditions, learn Canadian ways of life, and also introduce Norwegian values and traditions to Canada. Thus, they were mainly established because the immigrants deemed them necessary, like Herbert Gans has argued. The Norwegian language, however, was quite rapidly replaced with English in the Lutheran churches during the 1930s and 1940s, even though newspapers and the Sons of Norway clearly saw the retention of the language as pertinent for cultural survival. Despite of the gradual replacement of Norwegian, all of these organizations bear witness of how a distinct Norwegian-Canadian identity had been formed in western Canada in the early twentieth century.

Chapter three argued that during the Great Depression and World War Two the Norwegian-Canadian group seems to have become more acculturated. Although the Lutheran Church provided some aid with assistance from the Norwegian-American Lutheran church, many settlers moved further north on the prairies or further west to British Columbia in order to escape the Dust Bowl. Those who stayed saw the need to work together with other ethnic groups in, for instance, co-operatives and wheat boards to help each other through the trying times. With high intermarriage rates, in addition to a further scattering of Norwegian Canadians and the hardships many prairie settlers experienced, less time could be spent on in-group activities, and the number of congregations in the Norwegian Lutheran Church decreased markedly in this period. During World War Two, the country entered yet another crisis, where Norwegian Canadians again saw the need for cooperation with other ethnic groups. The relationship between Norway and Canada was strengthened through the establishment of a Norwegian air force training camp in Toronto, and it is likely that this generated pride among Canadians of Norwegian descent. The lack of sources from this period might suggest that Norwegians as an ethnic group had been largely assimilated, however, some cultural aspects were still maintained. For instance, an association for Scandinavian war relief was started in Camrose, the Sons of Norway lodges were still active, and during the mid-1950s some Scandinavians started planning the building of a Scandinavian Centre. However, it is safe to say that the group was markedly less active than it had been before the Great Depression and Second World War, although there were still some members who wanted to revive interest in Norwegian culture again.

Chapter three further argued that during and after World War Two, Canada went through massive political changes which resulted in the initiation of a Multiculturalism Policy. With time, Canadian political leaders changed their attitudes to ethnic groups, triggered by the establishment of institutions such as the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. If Canada wanted to become a world power and a peace keeper, all Canadians had to gain equal rights, and national unity was to be established by making the citizens feel proud to be part of a democratic nation. In addition to appeals by ethnic groups, lead by the Ukrainians, the Canadian government faced the threat of Quebec secession which put national unity in jeopardy. The Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism was established in 1963 as a quick solution to the problem, yet its conclusion that Canada was a bilingual and bicultural country understandably met with resistance from other ethnic groups who by now numbered about one third of the population. For fear of being degraded to second-class citizens, they started campaigning for the acknowledgment of Canada as a multicultural nation. The Ukrainian Canadians were the main leaders in this movement, but the term the “Third Force,” meaning all other ethnic groups besides the British and French, was introduced by the Ukrainian-Canadian MP Paul Yuzyk to show that other ethnic groups played an important role in Canada. The protests were effective in that the B&B Commission added Book IV, *The Cultural Contributions of the Other Ethnic Groups*, to their report in 1969.

In order to influence the Commission, ethnic groups submitted briefs, and the French were the most active since they were afraid they would lose their distinct status if it was established that Canada was a multicultural nation. The Ukrainian Canadians, on the other hand, were proponents of multiculturalism and fought for an acknowledgment of the important role they had played in the building of the Canadian west. Norwegian Canadians were not nearly as active as the Ukrainian Canadians, but it is noteworthy that the Scandinavian Centre in Edmonton submitted a brief in 1965. It shows that they were influenced by the movement, and that the group was becoming more active again. Unlike the Ukrainians, they did not ask for any special protections, but it was still noted that Scandinavians had been vital in the building of western Canada. The Scandinavian brief further differed in that it spoke on behalf of all of English-speaking Canada, and was markedly anti-French in its rhetoric. The brief stressed that a strong English-speaking Canada was the reason why the prairies had prospered and only they could strengthen and maintain the multicultural nature of Canada. Yet, although the Scandinavians did not ask for any

special protections and favoured a strong English-speaking Canada, they were not in favour of Anglo-conformity.

Volume IV of the B&B Commission became the basis for the Multiculturalism Policy which was introduced in 1971, and it resulted in an ethnic revival in Canada. The federal government initiated history projects, multiculturalism councils and financial sponsorship of activities in ethnic groups, and all provinces, with the notable exception of Quebec, initiated their own multiculturalism programs and laws. In 1988, the Multiculturalism Act was enacted, which finalized the move from Anglo-conformity to Multiculturalism, and ethnic groups were given the acknowledgment they had fought for. Although Norwegian Canadians had not been heavily involved in the movement to Multiculturalism, they did benefit from it both financially and through its strong signalling effect. The Solglyt Lodge in Edmonton experienced increased activity, and money was awarded to projects such as the Trollhaugen Language Arts and Culture Camp, a language club and a folk-dancing group. The University of Alberta started offering a program in Scandinavian studies where Norwegian was taught, and with sponsorship from Norwegian Canadians the program was spared when the University had to cut costs. Members of the lodge also joined Multiculturalism councils and they voiced their opinion when the new Multiculturalism Act was to be written in Alberta. Thus, with the acknowledgement that came with the policy, Norwegian Canadians became markedly more active, and this recognition seems to have triggered their interest more than the grants themselves. Although the period during the Great Depression and the Second World War had made the Norwegian-Canadian group markedly less active than before, chapter three concluded that they had still retained enough of their culture to revive it when the government initiated a policy which rewarded those groups who could deploy their ethnicity advantageously.

Chapter four asserted that the Multiculturalism Policy led to revived interest and an ethnic reformulation among Norwegian Canadians. With the inception of Multiculturalism as a state policy it was established that expressing one's cultural heritage was a way of being Canadian. Canada was a nation consisting of many different cultures, and to be Canadian was to celebrate this "unity in diversity." The increased acceptance of ethnic cultures and rewards for expressing and celebrating one's ethnicity therefore contributed to the ethnic reformulation among Norwegian Canadians. Grants were available for ethnic groups, and public displays, such as Heritage Days, awarded prizes to the groups with the best and most authentic displays of their ethnicity. This shift in thought resulted in a renewed pride in their Norwegian heritage, and contributed to a reformulation of their ethnicity, although their

ethnic identity was not the same as it had been in the pioneer era, where settlers had established organizations primarily because of the necessity to adapt to a new and foreign land. By 1971, most Canadians of Norwegian descent were well-adapted, spoke English and few could speak Norwegian or upheld Norwegian traditions on a daily basis. Thus, celebrating their heritage had become voluntary, however, the Multiculturalism Policy both encouraged and rewarded those who did.

Their Norwegian-Canadian ethnicity was expressed largely through readily accessible symbols, such as by participating in the annual *Lutefisk* supper, Leif Eriksson Night and the *Syttende mai* flag-raising. In many instances they revived crafts and activities that had been brought over from Norway in the pioneer era, such as *hardanger* embroidery and *rosemaling*, and the Solglyt Lodge hosted various classes where cultural skills pins could be earned. Their Norwegian heritage, then, was oftentimes separated from their daily lives, thereby serving a symbolic rather than a functional role. Yet, although they chose to celebrate their ethnicity mainly through symbols, their ethnic identity was still vital to them. It was for instance still of great concern that children did not seem as interested in their heritage, and this they tried to counter for through activities such as the Trollhaugen Language Arts and Culture Camp. Lodge meetings were an arena in which members could meet with other Norwegian Canadians who were interested in learning more about their heritage, and some members also wanted to share this interest with other Canadians. Films and displays at schools, shopping centres, museums, and the heritage festival in Edmonton portrayed Norwegians as artistic, brave and courageous Vikings and explorers, and they showed that they also had a distinct cuisine. Just as important, it was noted that they had been important in the building of Canada, and their prize-winning displays at Heritage Days underlined that they were still visible in multicultural Canada. Other activities, such as the Canadian Birkebeiner, further underlined this. Canadians of Norwegian descent identified with both Norway and Canada, which is evident from the celebration of Norway's national day with both Canadian and Norwegian flags, and by the connection of Norwegian traditions and symbols to important Canadian events, such as the birth of Alberta as a province and the repatriation of the Constitution.

Members of the Solglyt Lodge underlined that their heritage meant a lot to them. Language was no longer a distinct carrier of Norwegian culture, although some found it important to learn since it was part of their heritage. The Lutheran church and schools had also lost most of their ethnic function, and instead, the members' Norwegian heritage was expressed through the eating of ethnic foods, celebrating holidays in a Norwegian manner, and by taking part in activities in the Solglyt Lodge. Many had also initiated genealogical



projects which had increased their interest in their Norwegian background, and some had also initiated other projects to promote Norwegian culture in Alberta, such as the building of a stave church model and compiling of a book on Scandinavian sights in the province. Intermarriage with other ethnic groups had diluted some traditions, which was especially difficult for some members. The connection to the land and growing up in rural areas had also contributed to making them who they were today, but it is evident that Norwegian morale and democratic ideals were thought of as great contributors as well. These values were instilled in the pioneers, and were seen as great contributions to Canada. Although they saw themselves as Canadians, their Norwegian heritage had definitely helped define them and they saw it as worth passing on to their children and other Canadians. In addition, New Norway and Camrose, two former Norwegian settlements, further underlined the symbolic nature of the Norwegian-Canadian identity.

### ***Concluding Remarks***

This thesis has shown that the Norwegian-Canadian identity went through a process of change from its formulation in the early twentieth century to its reformulation in the wake of the Multiculturalism Policy. In the pioneer era, the immigrants had brought with them customs and traditions, and also banded together in order to make more sense of life in the new country. The blending of Norwegian and Canadian customs became the answer to their challenges. During the late 1930s and 1940s the group was markedly less active, but with the acknowledgment and financial help that the Multiculturalism Policy brought, Norwegian Canadians experienced a resurgence. Canadians of Norwegian descent went back into the pioneer era and revived customs and traditions which they found interesting and worth keeping, and the aspects they were the most proud of were displayed and shared with others. Thus, they actively chose to identify with their Norwegian ancestry, and the culture they expressed was symbolic rather than functional. Nevertheless, although the Norwegian-Canadian ethnic identity was manifested in different ways, their Norwegian heritage was of great importance for both the pioneers and the post-multiculturalism generations. Deep interest and a heavy personal involvement to keep a Norwegian heritage in Canada alive characterized them all. This is true, even though the daily reality was very different for the pioneers who in their sod houses struggled to make ends meet and those who commemorated their heritage by having lunch at the Lefse House.

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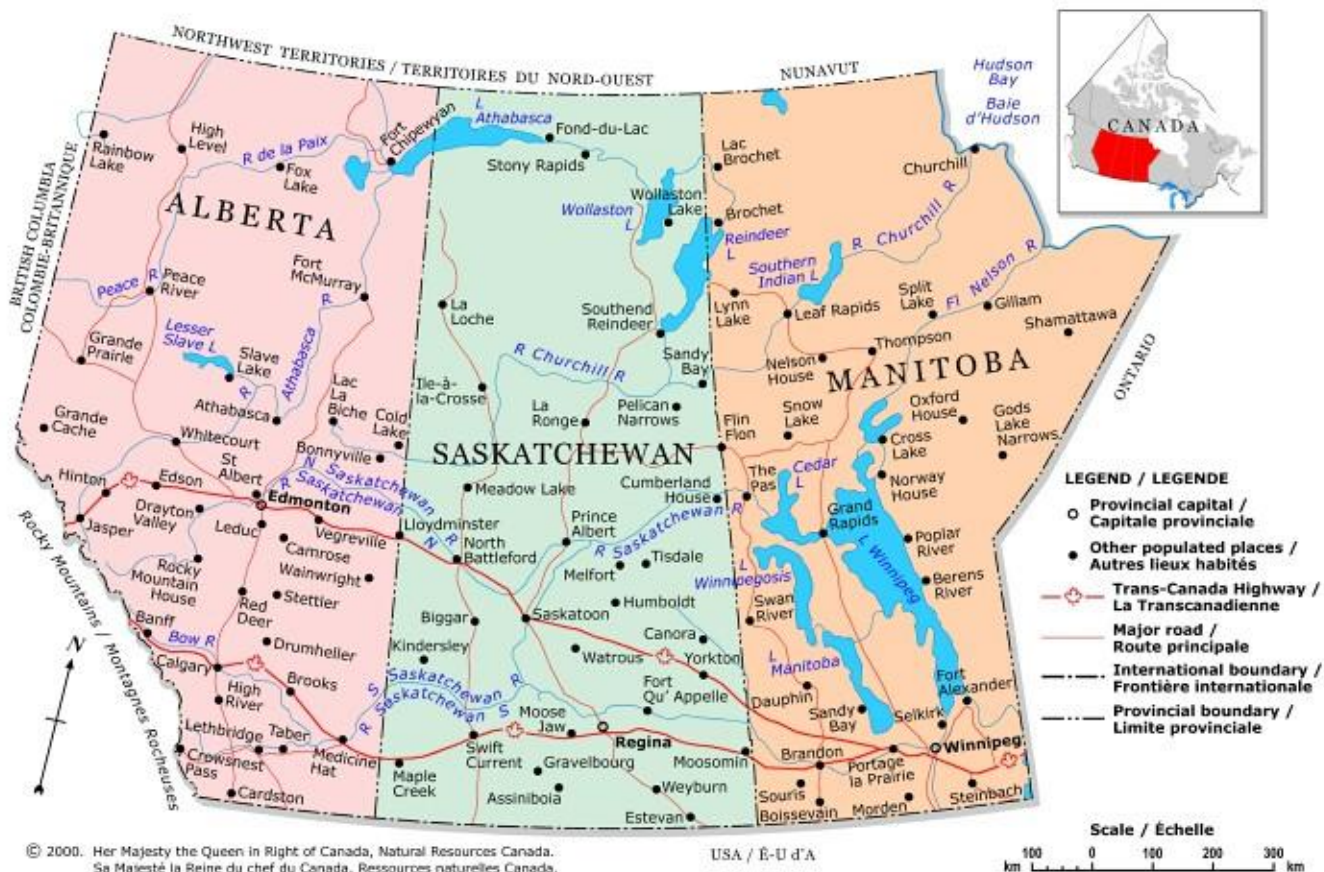
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## Appendix 1: Map of the Prairie Provinces



1

<sup>1</sup> "The Atlas of Canada: Prairie Provinces," accessed May 9, 2011, [http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/maps/reference/provincesterritories/prairie\\_provinces/referencemap\\_image\\_v](http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/maps/reference/provincesterritories/prairie_provinces/referencemap_image_view)

## Appendix 2: Pictures



Memorial at New Norway Cemetery and The Lefse House. Pictures taken by the writer, October 18, 2010.



Posters, University of Alberta Augustana Campus, Camrose. Pictures taken by the writer, October 18, 2010.



Interior of The Lefse House, Camrose. Pictures taken by the writer, October 18, 2010.





**Bethesda Lutheran Church and New Norway Cemetery, New Norway. Pictures taken by the writer, October 18, 2010.**



**Gubben and Hodda.<sup>2</sup>**



**Lefse making at Messiah Lutheran Church, Camrose. Picture taken by the writer, October 18, 2010.**

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<sup>2</sup> Picture received from Priscilla Kachmar by email correspondence